On Creating Favorable Applicant Impressions:

A Recruitment Perspective on Signaling Processes in the Interview

Thesis

(cumulative thesis)

Presented to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

of the University of Zurich

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Annika Wilhelmy

Accepted in the Autumn Term 2014

on the Recommendation of the Doctoral Committee:

Prof. Dr. Martin Kleinmann (main advisor)

Prof. Dr. Klaus Jonas

Prof. Dr. Filip Lievens

Zurich, 2014

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Meinen Eltern

für die ausgezeichneten Perspektiven auf diese Welt.

Contents

> If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own.
>
> – Henry Ford

Introduction

The selection interview remains a highly popular selection method that is given much attention by both practitioners and researchers (Dipboye & Johnson, 2013). One reason for this continuing fascination is that the term "selection" actually has a twofold meaning: Organizations select promising applicants to fill vacancies in a sustained manner, and applicants select organizations to find a place to work that fulfills their needs and provides promising career prospects (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012). As interviewers directly interact with applicants and serve as representatives of their organizations, they have long been considered the leverage point for recruiting outcomes such as organizational attractiveness and applicants' intention to accept a job offer (Rynes, 1989). Meta-analytic findings indicate that recruiters (i.e., people who conduct selection procedures such as interviews) can indeed have a tremendous impact on applicant attraction through the way they are perceived (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005).

Although we know that interviewer characteristics may influence recruiting outcomes, it remains unclear what interviewers may actually do to create favorable impressions on applicants, or, in other words, in what way interviewers' behavior may serve as signals for applicants. In this quest, signaling theory (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Spence, 1973) suggests that signaling processes generally consist of two main aspects: sending signals in terms of how the sender (e.g., the interviewer) shapes impressions, and responding to signals in terms of how the receiver (e.g., the applicant) reacts to these efforts. Regarding the aspect of sending signals, continuing publications on interviewers' recruitment influence (e.g.,

Celani & Singh, 2011; Rynes, 1989; Tsai & Huang, 2014) have stressed the unceasing need to elaborate signaling theory by gaining theoretical understanding of interviewers' deliberate attempts to create favorable impressions – also known as impression management (IM). Regarding the aspect of responding to signals, scholars have particularly emphasized that it is crucial to study the mechanisms that explain how applicants respond to both interviewers' deliberate signals in terms of IM (e.g., Gilmore, Stevens, Harrel-Cook, & Ferris, 1999; Tsai & Huang, 2014) and to unintentional, more general signals applicants perceive during the interview process (e.g., Dipboye et al., 2012). From a practical point of view, nuanced knowledge about the spectrum of interviewer signals and the mechanisms explaining their effects can enable organizations and interviewers to conduct interviews in a way that enhances recruiting outcomes.

This thesis aimed to contribute to these calls by examining both deliberate signals in terms of interviewer IM and general signals in terms of basic interview components with regard to the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers. In particular, the focus of the thesis was twofold: interviewers sending signals and applicants responding to these signals. Regarding interviewers sending signals, the aim was to study how interviewers deliberately try to create favorable impressions on applicants in terms of interviewers' IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes. Regarding applicants responding to signals, I aimed to examine the signaling mechanisms that both specific kinds of interviewer IM and basic interview components trigger on the side of the applicant.

In the following, I will first illustrate the crucial role interviews play regarding organizations' recruitment efforts and why it is important to enhance our understanding of signaling processes from a recruitment perspective. Then, I will provide an overview on signaling theory in the recruitment context and how this theory could be elaborated. Particularly, I will outline the current state of research on interviewers sending signals and

applicants responding to signals. Finally, I will introduce the three studies conducted for this thesis.

Selection Interviews from a Recruitment Perspective

While selection interviews continue to be a popular research topic and a prevalent tool in personnel selection, they have both selection and recruitment functions (Tsai & Huang, 2014). Not only do interviewers assess the suitability of applicants but applicants also evaluate how attracted they are to their prospective employer. From researchers' point of view, interviews' recruitment function adds an important new perspective that stresses the dynamic interactions of applicants and interviewers. From organizations' point of view, attraction of qualified applicants is considered to be a growing source of competitive advantage (Tsai & Huang, 2014). Thus, researchers and practitioners have been willing to make increasing efforts to understand how applicants experience and react to the interview process (Macan, 2009).

A key reason to study applicant reactions to the interview is that these reactions are related to various recruiting outcomes that are crucial for organizations' success (Dineen & Soltis, 2010). For instance, dissatisfied applicants tend to develop negative attitudes toward the organization and may thus reduce their intentions to accept a potential job offer (Chapman et al., 2005). In addition, applicants who react negatively to selection procedures are less likely to apply to the organization once more, tend to advise others against an application, and might even be willing to bring forth legal complaints and issues (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Furthermore, initial applicant impressions are likely to form the basis for important post-hire outcomes, such as job performance, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Thus, it is of high theoretical and practical importance to understand through which signals interviewers may influence applicants' impressions and thus maximize the effects of their recruitment efforts.

Signaling Processes in the Interview

Signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) is a general framework derived from game theory, economics, and evolutionary biology. This framework is particularly helpful for describing and explaining recruitment phenomena because recruitment usually involves two parties who are concerned with exchanging information while pursuing different goals. Specifically, organizations and applicants are interested in gaining accurate information about the other party to enhance the quality of their selection decisions. At the same time, applicants' goals of obtaining accurate information about organizations are imperfectly aligned with organizations' goals of sending favorable signals to appear attractive (Bangerter et al., 2012).

The most basic form of a signaling system consists of a sender, a signal, and a receiver (Spence, 1973). The present thesis focuses on the signaling timeline by Connelly et al. (2011) that depicts two main processes within this signaling system: sending signals and responding to signals. First, a sender (e.g., the interviewer) sends a signal to a receiver (e.g., the applicant) by showing a certain behavior. Second, a receiver chooses some of the sender's behaviors as signals and responds to them (Parkinson, 2012). Specifically, in terms of the interview, the applicant interprets the signal as an indicator of an unobservable but relevant characteristic of the interviewer and of the organization which the interviewer is representing. These interpretations should then lead to decisions and reactions on the side of the applicant which are, in turn, relevant to the interviewer (cf. Connelly et al., 2011).

It is important to note that the sender can think of him- or herself as signaling, but does not necessarily need to do so (Spence, 1973). On the one hand, signals often evolve from behaviors that were originally not intended as signaling (Bangerter et al., 2012). For instance, an applicant may choose to interpret a comment that an interviewer makes as a signal for the interviewer's competence, even though this comment was not intended to have this specific effect. On the other hand, while every behavior may give away some kind of information on

the sender, interviewers are likely to deliberately send signals to create favorable impressions on applicants (Morf & Koole, 2012; Tsai & Huang, 2014). These deliberate signals closely correspond to the concept of IM.

Scholars have noted that signaling theory is currently not well-defined and understood in the context of interviewers' intentions and behaviors, and the mechanisms that explain how applicants' impressions are formed (Celani & Singh, 2011; Connelly et al., 2011). However, in general, signaling theory is considered to hold a crucial potential to boost our understanding of why and how applicants react to interview processes and feel attracted to organizations (Celani & Singh, 2011). The enormous relevance and capability of this theory is also reflected in the fact that Spence shared the 2001 Nobel Prize in economics for his work on signaling using hiring as an example (Bangerter et al., 2012).

Interviewers sending signals to applicants. On the whole, there is evidence that the way interviewers are perceived by applicants has an influence on various recruiting outcomes (Dipboye et al., 2012). However, it is less evident what interviewers can actually do to favorably influence applicant impressions, particularly in terms of deliberate signals interviewers send (Macan, 2009). Past interview and recruitment research has seldom addressed the phenomenon of interviewer IM, as most prior studies have limited their focus on how applicants use IM (Koslowsky & Pindek, 2011). For instance, even though Spence (1973) emphasized in a footnote that signaling processes also apply to the selection decisions applicants make regarding prospective employers, he did not investigate what might constitute signals interviewers deliberately send to create favorable applicant impressions. Thus, to elaborate signaling theory and provide a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of how interviewers try to create favorable impressions on applicants, this thesis set out to provide insights into interviewer IM behaviors as well as their underlying intentions. Specifically, the present thesis aimed to provide understanding of what

impressions interviewers aim to create on applicants, what signals they deliberately send to create these impressions, and what outcomes they aim to achieve.

Applicants responding to interviewers' signals. Recruitment research has examined how applicants infer unobservable organizational characteristics from their perceptions during the interview process such as inferring what it would be like to work for the organization from perceived characteristics of the interviewer or the interview process (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Rynes, 1989; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). However, past research has considered only single segments of signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012). For instance, the first part of the signaling process in terms of the initial signal has mainly been neglected, even though this part may in fact serve as a decisive leverage point to further increase effectiveness of organizations' recruitment efforts. While research has demonstrated that perceived interviewer characteristics influence applicants' attitudes, emotions, and intentions, possible antecedents such as interviewer IM behaviors have remained unknown (Breaugh, 2013).

Furthermore, research has mainly ignored possible signaling mechanisms that may explain how signals are actually interpreted by applicants. Thus, there is a great need for understanding the processes through which applicants respond to signals, and what specific inferences they make with regard to the interviewer and the organization (Breaugh, 2013; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Therefore, this thesis aimed to examine the whole signaling process, including the signals that are interpreted by applicants, and to provide insights into the fine-grained mechanisms that explain how applicants respond to interviewers' signaling efforts.

The Present Thesis

This thesis encompassed three studies that I will outline in the following. The first study focused on deliberate interviewer signals in terms of interviewer IM on the basis of multifaceted qualitative data, the second study on signaling mechanisms triggered by interviewer IM on the basis of video data of real selection interviews, and the third study on

signaling mechanisms triggered by general signals such as perceived interview components on the basis of longitudinal field data.

Study 1 used a qualitative approach to develop a taxonomy and a conceptual model of interviewer IM in terms of deliberate attempts to create favorable impressions on applicants. For this purpose, we aimed at elaborating on signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) by identifying and analyzing the full range of impressions interviewers intend to create on applicants, what kinds of signals interviewers deliberately use to create their intended impressions, and what outcomes they pursue. The reasoning is that interviewers' aims and opportunities may be different from those of applicants, and therefore prior assumptions that interviewers use the same IM behaviors as applicants (e.g., Stevens, Mitchell, & Tripp, 1990) may not be justified. Thus, drawing on interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), this study was the first to systematically examine deliberate signaling processes on the side of the interviewer that go beyond those assumed to exist on the side of the applicant. At a practical level, insights about interviewers' IM behaviors are highly relevant because they could be used in interviewer training to increase organizations' recruitment success. To gain these important insights, *Study 1* followed a grounded theory approach. Multiple raters analyzed 30 in-depth interviews with professional interviewers and experienced applicants. Raters also observed 10 actual employment interviews and analyzed memos and image brochures that were handed to applicants.

The goal of *Study 2* was to elaborate on signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) and theoretical frameworks on IM (Gilmore et al., 1999) by investigating interviewer IM as a key predictor of perceived interviewer characteristics, thus providing insights into the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers. Past research has consistently confirmed that perceived interviewer characteristics such as competence and showing interest in the applicant have a positive influence on organizations' recruitment success (Carless & Imber, 2007; Harris & Fink, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). However,

one of the main shortcomings in understanding the interplay between interviewers and applicants concerns the actual signals that interviewers use to create favorable applicant perceptions (Breaugh, 2013). Knowing about the effects of interviewer IM on perceived interviewer characteristics is crucial for understanding interviewer influences on applicants' perceptions, emotions, and intentions. Minding these gaps, *Study 2* examined how two different kinds of interviewer IM behaviors (i.e., self-promotion and ingratiation) trigger two different signaling mechanisms (i.e., selling and inducing liking), and result in a broad range of consequences (i.e., applicant attraction and self-perceptions). To test our assumptions, observational and survey data from 110 operational interviews for a highly selective study program were analyzed.

Study 3 examined the process mechanisms linking basic interview components such as interview structure and rapport building to recruiting outcomes. Prior research on recruitment has demonstrated that interview structure and rapport building are major components of the employment interview and can influence how applicants react to the interview situation, yet we have limited theoretical understanding of the mechanisms explaining these influences (Dipboye et al., 2012). Drawing from signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) and trust belief frameworks (Klotz, da Motta Veiga, Buckley, & Gavin, 2013), we hypothesized that interview structure would increase recruiting outcomes by signaling organizational competence (i.e., being well-organized, reliable, and thorough) and at the same time would decrease recruiting outcomes by signaling a lack of organizational benevolence (i.e., being personal, warm, supportive). In line with trust belief frameworks, we further argued that rapport building would enhance recruiting outcomes by inducing applicants' trust in organizations' competence and benevolence. To test these hypotheses, longitudinal three-wave (pre-interview, post-interview, and follow-up) field data of 173 operational interviews were analyzed.

In the following three chapters the three studies are presented, respectively. The final chapter consists of the *General Discussion* with a summary of the major findings and contributions of this thesis, reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of this research, and implications for future research and practice.

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Chapter 1

How Interviewers Try to Make Favorable Impressions: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

To remain viable in today's highly competitive business environments, it is crucial for organizations to attract and retain top candidates. Hence, interviewers have the goal not only of identifying promising applicants, but also of presenting the organization in a favorable light. Although it has been proposed that interviewers' deliberate signaling behaviors are a key factor for attracting applicants and thus for ensuring organizations' economic success, no conceptual model about impression management (IM) exists from the viewpoint of the interviewer as separate from the applicant. To develop such a conceptual model on how and why interviewers use IM, our qualitative study elaborates signaling theory in the interview context by identifying the full range of impressions that interviewers intend to create for applicants, what kinds of signals interviewers deliberately use to create their intended impressions, and what outcomes they pursue. Following a grounded theory approach, multiple raters analyzed in-depth interviews with professional interviewers and experienced applicants. We also observed actual employment interviews and analyzed memos and image brochures to generate a conceptual model of interviewer IM. Results showed that the spectrum of interviewers' IM intentions goes well beyond what has been proposed in past research, such as the intention to signal superiority. Furthermore, interviewers apply a broad range of IM behaviors, including verbal and nonverbal as well as paraverbal, artifactual, and administrative behaviors. An extensive taxonomy of interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes is developed, and interrelationships between these elements are presented and discussed.

The employment interview continues to be the most popular selection tool used by both applicants and organizations to assess and select one another (Macan, 2009). It is characterized by social exchange processes between applicants (who want to get hired) and representatives of the organization (who want to attract and select the best candidates). To reach their goals, applicants and interviewers try to detect what their interaction partner is interested in and try to use this information to send appropriate signals (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012).

Signaling processes in the interview have mainly been studied in terms of impression management (IM) efforts (Delery & Kacmar, 1998). Scholars have repeatedly pointed out that interviewers frequently use IM, and that these deliberate behaviors are a key factor for attracting applicants and thus ensuring an organization's economic success (e.g., Dipboye & Johnson, 2013; Rosenfeld, 1997). However, it is striking that past interview research has rarely addressed the phenomenon of interviewer IM, as most prior studies have limited their focus on how applicants use IM (Koslowsky & Pindek, 2011). Furthermore, research has assumed that interviewers use the same IM behaviors as applicants (e.g., Stevens, Mitchell, & Tripp, 1990) without taking a closer look at what interviewers actually do when they interact with applicants.

In the present study, we define interviewer IM as interviewers' deliberate attempts to create favorable impressions on applicants (cf. Schlenker, 1980) and argue that it is important to identify and explain interviewer IM. As outlined below, we argue that interviewers' aims and opportunities may be different from those of applicants, and therefore their IM efforts should be somewhat different as well. Furthermore, scholars have noted that signaling theory, which is most often used to explain recruitment phenomena (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), is currently not well-defined and understood in the context of interviewers' IM intentions and behaviors (Celani & Singh, 2011). Thus, to provide a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of how and why interviewers try to create favorable impressions on

applicants, it is crucial to learn more about interviewers' deliberate signaling behaviors as well as their underlying intentions. At a practical level, insights gathered in the present research could be used in interviewer training to increase organizations' recruitment success.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to use a qualitative approach to create a taxonomy and a conceptual model by identifying and analyzing the full range of possible interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes. We use this conceptual model to point out promising avenues for future research on interviewer IM. Drawing on interdependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), this study sheds light on how interviewer and applicant IM are similar and distinct. Furthermore, our study elaborates signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) in the interview context by gaining insights into specific signals that are deliberately used by interviewers, and why these signals are being sent.

Theoretical Background

Signaling Processes in the Interview

The employment interview is a dynamic exchange in which interviewers and applicants engage in social interaction, gather information, and create and form impressions (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014). Consequently, in the last two decades, researchers have increasingly considered both interviewer and applicant perspectives and have given more attention to how applicants and interviewers intentionally adapt their behaviors to pursue their interests (Melchers, Ingold, Wilhelmy, & Kleinmann, in press).

In employment interviews, applicants have information that is of interest to interviewers but to which interviewers do not necessarily have access (e.g., information about applicants' personality). Similarly, interviewers have information that is of interest to applicants but to which applicants do not necessarily have access (e.g., selection criteria). In situations like this, when two parties have access to dissimilar information, signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) is helpful for describing and explaining behavior.

According to this theory, signaling processes consist of several elements, such as two primary actors – the signaler, sender, or insider (e.g., the interviewer), and the receiver or outsider (e.g., the applicant) – as well as the actual signals sent by the signaler to the receiver (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). The main idea underlying this theory is that the interview creates an ideal situation for applicants to observe interviewers as salient representatives of the organization and to generalize these observations to the job opening and the organization (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). However, as Connelly et al. (2011) pointed out, the signaler can also take an active part in this signaling process. For instance, interviewers can deliberately choose whether and how to reduce information asymmetry by intentionally communicating (or signaling) positive qualities to applicants who lack this information (Connelly et al., 2011).

In this vein, IM behaviors reflect an intentional way of sending signals (cf. Schlenker, 1980). While interviewers' signals could be anything that is interpreted as a signal by the applicant, interviewer IM refers to signals that are deliberately sent by the interviewer. Additionally, while interviewer signals could induce negative impressions if applicants decide to draw negative conclusions, interviewer IM is always applied with the intention of creating favorable applicant impressions. In other words, interviewer IM relates to a deliberate facet of signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012).

Even though signaling theory is the framework most often used to explain recruitment phenomena, it is currently not well-defined and understood when it comes to organizational representatives' intentions and deliberate signaling behaviors (Celani & Singh, 2011). To develop signaling theory, there have been calls to view and study signals within their social context, such as the context of employment interviews. As such, a typology of signals that are sent in certain contexts – like the employment interview – would be of high value to partition these signals into meaningful categories and thus further understand the signaling phenomenon. In addition, research would benefit from investigating the incentives of

signalers, such as the outcomes they want to achieve by using signals (Connelly et al., 2011). Thus, the main focus of this study will be on signaling intentions and the signals that interviewers deliberately use to create favorable applicant impressions.

Signaling on the side of the applicant. Thus far, signaling theory in the context of the interview has mainly focused on applicants in terms of what IM behaviors they use, and in what way these behaviors influence their interview ratings (Bangerter et al., 2012). Although interviewer and applicant IM are likely to be different in many ways, the underlying structure of IM behaviors may overlap to some degree. Hence, it seems worthwhile to provide an overview of what is known about applicant IM.

The most widely used taxonomies of applicant IM distinguish between self-promotion or self-focused IM behaviors, such as describing one's past accomplishments and competencies in a positive way, and ingratiation or other-focused IM behaviors, such as flattering one's interaction partner (e.g., Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009). Furthermore, many taxonomies distinguish between assertive IM behaviors that aim at enhancing one's own image and defensive IM behaviors that aim at defending against threats to a positive image (e.g., Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon, 2002; Van Iddekinge, McFarland, & Raymark, 2007).

While research on applicant IM has primarily focused on verbal IM behaviors (i.e., the content of applicants' responses and statements), scholars have pointed out that much more should be considered as part of one's attempt to create a positive impression (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012). For instance, nonverbal IM has been seen as a fruitful area of research (Macan, 2009), including IM behaviors such as smiling, eye contact, body posture (Levine & Feldman, 2002), as well as head nods, handshakes, and hand gestures (McFarland, Yun, Harold, Viera, & Moore, 2005). In addition, applicants might use verbal behaviors through ways other than words (Barrick et al., 2009), also referred to as paraverbal

or paralinguistic behaviors (DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999). Examples of paraverbal behaviors include style of delivery (e.g., pitch and speech rate) and verbal fluency.

Potential differences between applicants' and interviewers' signaling. Applicants and interviewers find themselves in the same social setting, but it might be misleading to apply existing applicant IM taxonomies to interviewers. There may be considerable differences in applicants' and interviewers' roles, intentions, and scopes of action. Interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003) focuses on the causal determinants of dyadic social behavior and provides a conceptual framework on the structure of interpersonal situations. The main idea of this theory is that characteristics of the situation (e.g., individuals' interests, information, and level of dependence) exert strong effects on individuals' behavior, for example, IM behavior. Thus, although interviewers should apply some IM behaviors similar to those of applicants, they should also apply different IM behaviors because they differ from applicants regarding several situational characteristics.

First, interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003) suggests that individuals are likely to use IM in different ways when they pursue different goals. As pointed out by Bangerter et al. (2012), applicants and interviewers have partly divergent interests. Thus, although part of applicants' and interviewers' IM might overlap, other aspects should be distinct. For instance, while applicants' primary signaling interest is to get a job offer, interviewers' interest is to identify, attract and finally hire the best performer. With this end in mind, interviewers try to create a favorable image not only of themselves but also of the job and the organization as a whole (Connelly et al., 2011). In other words, interviewers need to influence applicants' image of multiple targets. Thus, in addition to IM behaviors that we know from applicant IM research such as self-promotion, interviewers should use additional strategies to promote the job and the organization. Furthermore, in addition to the goal of promoting oneself, the job, and the organization, interviewers have also been given recommendations to provide realistic information to facilitate self-selection (Wanous, 1976)

and to signal honesty (Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011). Thus, in order to create realistic applicant impressions, interviewers may apply behaviors that go beyond applicant IM and that should result in a broader range of IM behaviors than the ones that applicants apply.

Second, according to interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), individuals' behavior is influenced by the information that is available to them. This is particularly relevant in employment interviews, which involve interaction between strangers and are characterized by the presence of vague information about the other (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). For example, interviewers have access to information on applicants' past failures, potential weaknesses, and gaps in the applicants' CV – whereas applicants usually do not easily get information before the interview regarding the job, the organization, and the interviewer. This depth of interviewers' information on applicants should give them more possibilities to deliberately send signals and should thus translate into a broader set of IM behaviors as compared to applicants.

Third, interviewers and applicants are to some extent dependent upon each other, but in distinct ways, which should result in some differences in their IM (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). For instance, applicants rely on interviewers because interviewers' evaluations affect their chances of a job offer (cf. Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009). Therefore, applicants aim to create positive images. Similarly, interviewers depend on applicants in terms of applicants' job choice behavior, and hence intend to create positive impressions on applicants (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012). However, interviewers are usually in a more powerful position than applicants because applicants only get to make a decision about whether or not to work for the organization if they are offered a job (Anderson, 1992). Consequently, interviewers might have the intention of signaling this power by using IM behaviors that go beyond applicants' IM.

Potential signaling on the side of the interviewer. When organizations try to attract and retain promising applicants, deliberate signals such as interviewer IM behavior have been

proposed to be particularly important (Celani & Singh, 2011). Nevertheless, despite extensive calls in the literature to examine how and why interviewers intend to affect applicant impressions (cf., Delery & Kacmar, 1998; Dipboye & Johnson, 2013; Gilmore, Stevens, Harrel-Cook, & Ferris, 1999; Macan, 2009), there have been no systematic attempts to examine the full range of IM behaviors used by interviewers. However, evidence suggests that interviewers pursue specific goals and that there are certain interviewer characteristics that positively influence applicant attraction (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Derous, 2007).

It is important to note that only vague categories of behavior have been examined with regard to applicants' perceptions of interviewer behaviors, (e.g., competent behavior, professional behavior, friendly behavior, cf. Chapman et al., 2005). Whereas it has been found that certain interviewer behaviors and characteristics influence recruiting outcomes, such as perceived interviewer personableness, competence, informativeness, trustworthiness, warmth, humor, and job knowledge (Carless & Imber, 2007; Chapman et al., 2005), the signals that interviewers deliberately send to create these intended impressions have not been identified. Knowing more about these specific, deliberate signals is crucial because it would help interviewers to influence applicant impressions and thus to enhance recruitment success.

Furthermore, we do not know to what degree these interviewer behaviors represent IM in terms of intentional, goal-directed behaviors. For instance, Tullar (1989) examined on-campus interviewer utterances and found that about two-thirds of the utterances could be categorized as being structuring (e.g., expanding on a previous statement) and nearly one-third as demonstrating equivalence such as mutual identification (e.g., "That is interesting"). Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether, how, and why interviewers intentionally adjust their behaviors to create favorable applicant impressions, that is, to appear competent, professional, or friendly.

Aims of the Present Study

In summary, interviewers' goals and opportunities for IM are likely to differ from applicants' goals and opportunities. Therefore, to enhance our theoretical understanding of this phenomenon and to enhance interview practice, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive taxonomy and a conceptual model about the deliberate signaling processes on the side of the interviewer in terms of interviewer IM. To address these empirical and theoretical gaps, we want to explore three main questions with our qualitative study. Based on these research questions, our aim is to develop a conceptual model and a taxonomy about how and why interviewers apply IM.

> *Research Question 1:* What do interviewers intend to signal to applicants, that is, what are interviewers' IM intentions?
>
> *Research Question 2:* What signals do interviewers deliberately use to create their intended impressions, that is, what IM behaviors do interviewers apply?
>
> *Research Question 3:* What outcomes do interviewers want to achieve by deliberately sending signals to applicants, that is, what are interviewers' intended IM outcomes?

Method

Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that is particularly appropriate for our study because it has been developed to understand phenomena about which little is known (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) – such as interviewer IM. In addition, grounded theory has been shown to help researchers understand complex social processes (Willig, 2009). Thus, it has been suggested that researchers apply qualitative research strategies, like grounded theory, in employment interview and IM research (cf. Macan, 2009).

A core characteristic of grounded theory research is that data collection and analysis are closely interrelated to engage with a phenomenon as deeply as possible. As such, analyzing data influences the strategy of data collection and vice-versa (Glaser & Strauss,

1967). Hence, in our study, data analysis influenced our subsequent choice of participants, interview questions, observation emphasis, and our choice of topics for further data analysis.

Furthermore, grounded theory involves collecting data from multiple sources using multiple techniques and analyzing it from multiple perspectives to create a multi-faceted sense of the phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, following recommendations by Bluhm, Herman, Lee, and Mitchell (2011), we sampled diverse interviewers and applicants and collected comprehensive information from in-depth interviews with interviewers and applicants, observations of selection interviews, the review of memos related to these in-depth interviews and observations, and the review of informational material that was given or recommended to applicants during the interview. These data were analyzed and discussed by multiple researchers (following recommendations by Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Moreover, according to grounded theory, data collection and analysis continues until no new information is gained, that is, until no new categories and concepts emerge from the data. In the present study, this point, which is called *theoretical saturation* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), was reached after analyzing 30 in-depth interviews, 10 observations of real employment interviews, 43 memos, and 12 pieces of informational material.

Samples

To better understand interviewers' IM behaviors, we studied samples of populations who had firsthand experience with the social interaction processes in employment interviews: people regularly conducting employment interviews (professional interviewers) and people who had recently participated in several employment interviews (experienced applicants). We included experienced applicants because signalers (i.e., interviewers) might not always report all of the signals they apply. Specifically, we used information provided by experienced applicants to develop ideas about possible interviewer IM intentions and behaviors. We then asked professional interviewers whether the behaviors and intentions reported by experienced applicants actually represented deliberate interviewer IM.

To achieve high heterogeneity of data sources, we began our study with different variables in mind that might influence professional interviewer IM, such as gender, age, interview experience, hierarchical level, and educational level (Dipboye, 2005). Professional interviewers were 27 to 63 years old (M = 41.5, SD = 12.2), and 60.0% were male. Their interview experience ranged from several months to 40 years, and the number of interviews conducted in the past 12 months ranged from 4 to 300. Furthermore, their hierarchical levels were very diverse ranging from assistant positions (e.g., HR assistant) to senior manager positions (e.g., commanding officer), and their vacancies ranged from trainee and administrative positions to positions with managerial functions. The industry sectors of these vacancies were also very diverse, such as human health services, financial services, and the army.

The experienced applicants were 25 to 46 years old (M = 31.1, SD = 7.7), and 33.3% were male. Their interview experience ranged from 5 to 30 interviews, and the number of interviews in which they had participated in the past 12 months ranged from 3 to 11. Furthermore, our applicant sample consisted of people applying for various positions such as paid internships, administrative jobs, PhD programs, executive officer, senior consultant, and senior manager positions in various industry sectors ranging from human health services, financial services, travel services, to research and education.

Following an approach within grounded theory called *theoretical sampling* (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), we did not determine a priori what kind of and how much data we wanted to collect. Instead, we used information gathered during the research process to develop ideas about who could be interviewed and observed next. These new data were used to see whether additional relevant categories might emerge, whether categories were well established, and whether relationships between categories were fully developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, later in the process, we also approached professional interviewers and experienced applicants from industry sectors that were not yet included in our sample (e.g.,

manufacturing, wholesale trade services, and gambling services) because industry sectors were mentioned as a potentially important aspect by participants. Furthermore, participants' comments led us additionally to include professional third party interviewers (e.g., recruiting consultants) and interviewers and applicants with experience in panel interviews (because of the commonness of such interviews). Sampling was done through job websites, an alumni pool of a Swiss university, and references from our participants.

Data Collection

For data collection, we applied several methods as suggested by Bluhm et al. (2011): semi-structured in-depth interviews of interviewers and applicants, observations of real employment interviews, memos, and review of informational materials provided to applicants. The in-depth interviews and observations are described below. Memos (one to two pages) were written subsequent to each in-depth interview, observation, and during the coding process. They were used to document ideas for data interpretation and to engage in self-reflection about potential personal biases (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006). Furthermore, as suggested by Bansal and Corley (2011), informational material that was given or recommended to applicants was analyzed such as informational brochures.

In-depth interviews. All of the 30 in-depth interviews (1 hour) with professional interviewers and experienced applicants were conducted by the first author in Switzerland and Germany. Regarding in-depth interviews with experienced applicants, the main goal was to develop ideas on what IM intentions interviewers might have had and what signals they might have applied to create favorable impressions. Regarding the interviews with professional interviewers, however, we placed special emphasis on whether they really reported having had these intentions and whether they deliberately engaged in them in terms of IM.

Following an orienting theoretical perspective (Locke, 2001), interviews were based on semi-structured interview guides[1] derived from insights gained during the review of the existing literature. These interview guides covered four aspects: (a) whether the particular impressions that applicants form during interviews might be important to interviewers, (b) impressions that interviewers want applicants to form, (c) behaviors that interviewers apply to create these favorable impressions, and (d) possible consequences of interviewer IM. Part (a) of the interview guide ensured that interviewers were concerned about the impressions applicants form during the interview and were thus motivated to intentionally influence these impressions. It also prepared the mind-set of our participants and stimulated them to take a recruitment perspective on the interview to ensure that we had a common basis for the data from all interviews.

Furthermore, our interview questions were continuously adapted during the data collection process depending on the insights we gained (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): Questions asked earlier in the research process were different from those asked later as we better understood the applicants' and professional interviewers' experiences and contexts. For instance, to verify ideas that evolved from experienced applicants' statements, we adapted the questions for our in-depth interviews with professional interviewers to verify that these behaviors were intentionally applied in terms of IM instead of just naturally occurring behavior. Hence, our in-depth interviews became increasingly focused over the course of the study.

At the beginning of each in-depth interview, participants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity during further data processing. They were instructed to answer our questions based on the employment interviews they had conducted (or participated in as an applicant) within the past 12 months. At the end of each in-depth interview, participants were given a

[1] The interview guide and the observation guide are available from the first author upon request.

survey that covered demographic and context information. Furthermore, we audio-recorded all in-depth interviews.

Observations. As interviewer IM behaviors might not always be recognized by either professional interviewers or experienced applicants, we decided to observe 10 actual employment interviews. Following recommendations by Bluhm et al. (2011), these observations served as an additional data source to develop ideas on possible interview IM categories that could be verified in subsequent in-depth interviews with professional interviewers.

The observed employment interviews were between 25 minutes and 2 hours long and took place in seven different organizations. Two of these employment interviews were with the same professional interviewers. Furthermore, one professional interviewer took part in both the in-depth interviews and the observations. In addition, three of the employment interviews were not only observed but also audio or video recorded. To avoid observer-expectancy effects, observation participants were not told that this study examined interviewer IM behavior (Kazdin, 1977). Instead, they were briefly informed that we were interested in the social processes taking place in employment interviews and were ensured confidentiality.

The first author and a trained I/O Master's level student conducted all of the observations using an observation guide. The aim of this observation guide was to help consider all important aspects of the interview. The guide consisted of three parts: observations prior to the employment interview (e.g., how applicants were welcomed by interviewers), different kinds of interviewers' IM behavior during the employment interview (e.g., nonverbal IM behavior), and observations after the employment interview (e.g., how interviewers said good-bye to applicants). In addition, the observation guide contained a section for unstructured observations in order to include data that might lead to new

interpretations or themes. Similar to the in-depth interview questions, the content of the observation guide was constantly adapted in the course of the research process.

During and after each observation, the observers wrote down whether the professional interviewers showed the IM behaviors contained in the observation guide and noted verbatim what the interviewers said. Observed behaviors were described with as much detail as possible. At the end of each observation, the observed interviewers filled out a survey that covered demographic and context information. As described above, the observed behaviors were then incorporated into the in-depth interviews with professional interviewers to ensure that they actually constituted instances of IM.

Data Analysis

Content analysis. Following grounded theory principles (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006), all the data were analyzed in three main steps. First, data were inspected sentence by sentence by two independent raters of a pool of five raters (the first author, the I/O Master's level student who also served as an observer, and three other I/O Master's level students). Raters participated in a half-day training session conducted by the first author to learn and practice how to code (e.g., how to apply and modify categories) using the coding software ATLAS.ti 6 (Friese, 2011). The use of two coders ensured multiple perspectives on the data, as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008) in order to increase creativity in the analysis while decreasing personal bias. Furthermore, to increase immersion in the data content, one of these two coders had always either conducted, observed, or transcribed the in-depth interview under investigation and was therefore familiar with the interview content. Regarding the coding of the in-depth interview data, interviews were transcribed verbatim until we came closer to saturation (i.e., when the number of new categories was decreasing notably). This was the case when twenty of the interviews had been transcribed, which totaled 613 double-spaced pages. For the remaining ten interviews, tape recordings were directly coded. Observations were coded based on observation notes and, if available, based on audio

and video recordings. Following Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2009), coding was done based on an evolving system of categories, a so-called coding dictionary that was continually modified based on iterative comparisons between newly coded and previously analyzed data. Each word, sentence, paragraph, and passage was seen as a feasible coding unit and could be coded. The ATLAS.ti 6 software was used to enter codes, perform text and audio searches, and identify intersections of codes (following recommendations by Grzywacz et al., 2007).

In a second step, the two coders met in joint coding meetings. They compared individual codings and discussed discrepancies until consensus was established about which code was appropriate. Furthermore, the technique of triangulation was used, meaning that agreement and discrepancies among different data sources and different types of data were examined and discussed to see whether they led to the same categories (Willig, 2009). For example, our observations of actual employment interviews provided particularly valuable insights into nonverbal and artifactual interviewer IM behaviors that were not spontaneously reported by professional interviewers. These behaviors were either confirmed when we directly asked interviewers about it (e.g., displaying application documents on the interview table), or not confirmed and thus not integrated into our system of categories (e.g., displaying one's security pass).

In a third step, coders identified abstract themes and dimensions at the end of each joint meeting. The aim was to 'lift' the data to a conceptual level by comparing codes and ideas emerging from the data (Martin & Turner, 1986). Coders remained attentive to how these abstract themes were related to existing research, and how existing research could be used to identify and name new themes (Locke, 2001). After these meetings, any new codes (including descriptions and example quotes), and any code changes were documented in the coding dictionary.

Interrater agreement. Given the emergent nature of our categories, it was not possible to determine interrater agreement during the primary coding process described

above. Therefore, we engaged in a secondary coding process to test the reliability of our final categories and to determine the fit of the emergent categories with the data (Butterfield, Trevino, & Ball, 1996, p. 1484). Following Kreiner et al. (2009), we gave two of the four coders mentioned above a final version of the coding dictionary that had emerged as well as a representative transcript subsample of 60 pages (10 percent, following Bluhm et al., 2011) containing 185 interview passages. The coders were instructed to assign to each interview passage the category they believed best represented the passage. The overall percentage of agreement between the two coders was .91 and Cohen's Kappa was .88, suggesting very good agreement (Fleiss & Cohen, 1973).

Member checks. Finally, we conducted member checks (also known as participant checks, informant feedback, communicative validation, or respondent validation) to give voice to our participants (Bluhm et al., 2011) and to ensure that the categories derived in this study were indeed grounded in the data (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Member checks imply that categories are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We went back to the 30 participants in the in-depth interviews and asked for their feedback on our categories. Three of these member checks were conducted by telephone, and 23 were conducted online (an 86.7 % overall response rate).

First, participants were introduced to all of the categories derived in this study. As we were interested in in-depth feedback, participants were then allocated to one of four different groups. Each group was given a different subsample of categories to focus on. Regarding this subsample of categories, participants were asked to what extent they believed each single category was useful for conceptualizing interviewer IM. Specifically, they were asked to indicate whether the behaviors represented deliberate interviewer IM in terms of behaviors that are applied to create favorable applicant impressions. Second, we asked participants whether any categories should be merged, deleted, divided, or added, and whether they would

change the categories' structure. Third, we analyzed participants' ideas and commentaries, went back to our data for confirmation, and integrated the results into our system of categories.

Results

Overview

The aim of this study was to investigate *how* interviewers try to create favorable impressions on applicants in terms of interviewer IM intentions and behaviors, and *why* they engage in these behaviors in terms of intended IM outcomes. Our model of interviewer IM is depicted in Figure 1. Regarding interviewer IM intentions, the data analysis yielded five categories that we organized into two major themes (see Table 1): primary interviewer IM intentions that refer to interviewers' overriding goal of representing the organization, the job, and themselves (i.e., signaling attractiveness and signaling authenticity), and secondary interviewer IM intentions that refer to interviewers' actual personal interactions with applicants (i.e., signaling closeness, signaling distance in terms of professionalism, and signaling distance in terms of superiority). In terms of interviewer IM behaviors, we found five different types of behavior: verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal, artifactual, and administrative interviewer IM behaviors (see Tables 2 to 6). With regard to intended interviewer IM outcomes, we found three different types: outcomes related to organizations, related to applicants, and related to interviewers themselves (see Table 7). Many of the emergent categories were unanticipated by past IM research (indicated by italicized category names in Tables 1 to 7).

How Interviewers Apply IM

What are interviewers' IM intentions? To gain insights on how interviewers apply IM, we analyzed interviewers' underlying intentions. We found a broad spectrum of impressions that interviewers intend to create on applicants, and that different aims or foci can be distinguished (see Table 1). We found that interviewers try to influence applicant

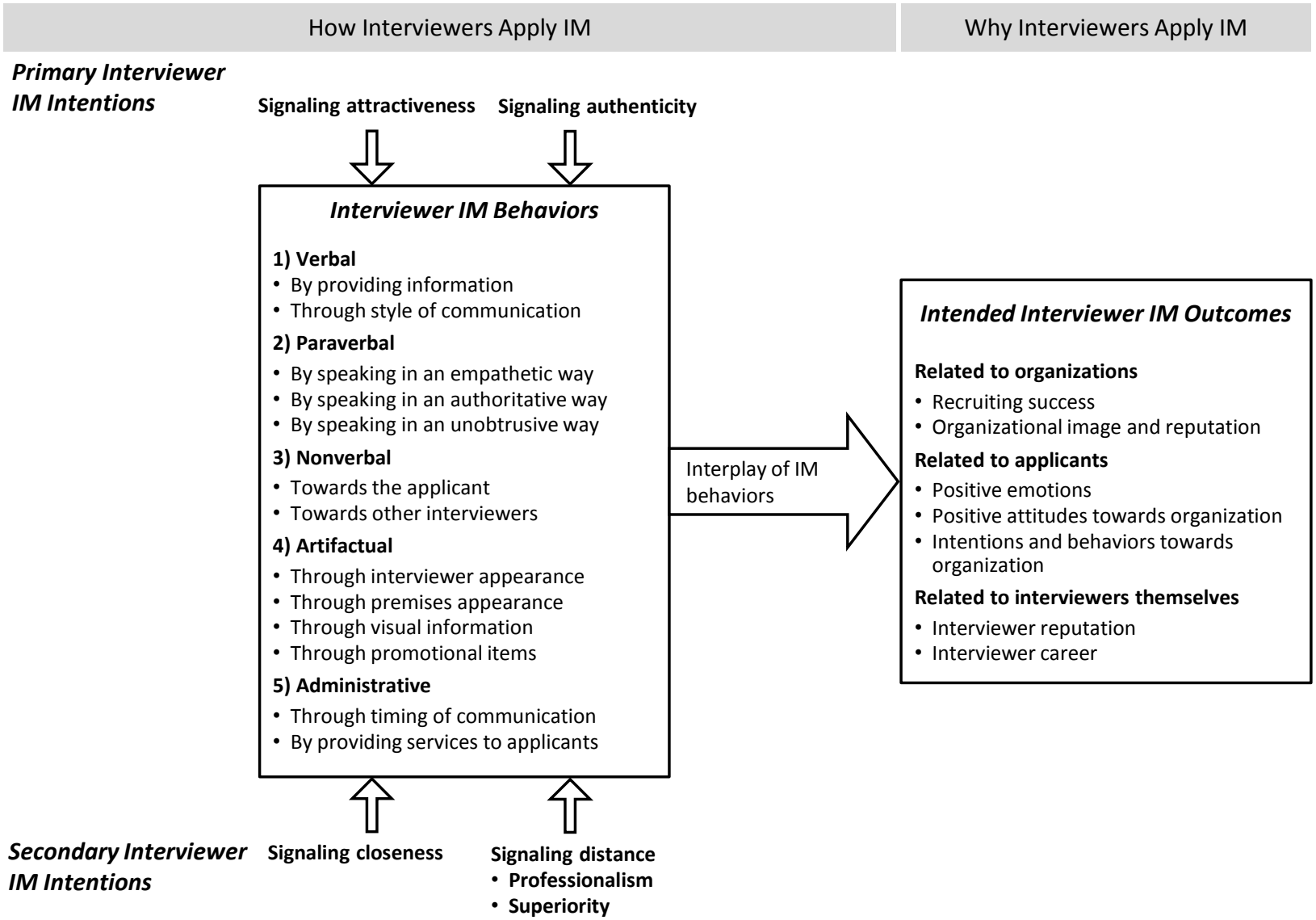

Figure 1. Emerging model of interviewer impression management (IM) intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes.

impressions not only regarding impressions of the interviewers themselves, but also regarding impressions of the team, the job, and the organization as a whole. For example, one professional interviewer said[2] "The impression I create on the applicant concerning myself as a person and concerning our company and our way of working, I think that's the basis for the whole [hiring] process that may start afterwards … What counts is the perception that the candidate gets of me and everything I'm representing" (Interviewer 6[3]). Hence, compared to applicant IM, interviewer IM may be considered as a more complex phenomenon because applicants' major (and perhaps sole) aim is to enhance interviewer impressions of themselves (cf. Barrick et al., 2009).

Furthermore, we noticed that early in the in-depth interviews, participants mainly told us about the impressions applicants should receive regarding the organization, the job, and the interviewer as a person. As these IM intentions have to do with the main goal of the interviewer (i.e., representing the company) and constitute very basic intentions, we called them "*primary*". Data analysis suggested that interviewer IM serves two main purposes: signaling attractiveness (e.g., "to present your company as a strong employer, as a strong brand," Interviewer 5; Category 1)" and signaling authenticity (e.g., "as authentic as possible, representing what the firm or team is like," Interviewer 12; Category 2).

While the intention of appearing attractive is in line with the dominant understanding of IM (e.g., Jones & Pittman, 1982), the intention of appearing authentic adds an important new aspect. It suggests that for interviewers, creating realistic images is important not only in terms of realistic job previews and self-selection (Wanous, 1976), but also in terms of being

[2] For the sake of brevity, quotes supporting these categories are not presented for all categories but are available from the first author upon request.
[3] Quotes are labeled with participant code numbers, which either start with "Interviewer" to indicate that a professional interviewer was the source of information, "Applicant" to indicate that an experienced applicant was the source of information, or "Observation" to indicate that an observed employment interview was the source of information. More detailed information about any quotes presented in this article is available from the first author upon request.

Table 1

Interviewer IM Intentions: What Do Interviewers Intend to Signal to Applicants? New[a] Intention Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM intentions		Definition: Interviewers might have the intention to…
Primary interviewer IM intentions		
1.	Signaling attractiveness	create a positive, attractive impression of themselves, the job, the team, or the organization as a whole
2.	*Signaling authenticity*	create a realistic, authentic impression of themselves, the job, the team, or the organization as a whole
Secondary interviewer IM intentions		
Signaling closeness		
3.	Building rapport	build rapport with the applicant and put the applicant at ease
4.	*Signaling individuality and appreciation*	convey an impression of individual consideration and a feeling of appreciation
5.	Signaling trustworthiness	create an impression of being a trustworthy, reliable person
Signaling distance in terms of professionalism		
6.	*Signaling fairness*	demonstrate the high objectivity and fairness of the selection process
7.	*Signaling selection complexity and effort*	demonstrate the high complexity of the selection process and how much time and effort is invested to choose a candidate
8.	*Signaling straightforwardness*	communicate in a clear, straightforward way
Signaling distance in terms of superiority		
9.	Signaling status and power of decision	demonstrate their higher status, superiority, and their power in the selection decision process
10.	*Signaling performance expectations*	challenge applicants, test their limits and demonstrate high performance demands
11.	*Signaling suspense*	minimize feedback to keep applicants in suspense; convey a feeling of uncertainty

[a] New in comparison to Barrick et al. (2009) and Jones and Pittman (1982).

perceived as sincere and taken seriously by applicants (e.g., "[impression] of myself, that I'm trustworthy," Interviewer 10).

Furthermore, participants told us about additional IM intentions that we called "*secondary*" because in contrast to the two primary IM intentions, these intentions seemed to be more closely related to interviewers' personal interaction with the applicant and were usually mentioned later in the in-depth interviews. Regarding secondary interviewer IM intentions, three major categories emerged from what professional interviewers reported in the in-depth interviews: signaling closeness ("It's about appreciating the applicant," Interviewer 7; Categories 3 to 5), signaling distance in terms of professionalism ("This creates an impression of professionalism," Interviewer 7; Categories 6 to 8), and signaling distance in terms of superiority (e.g., "I can certainly be stand-offish," Interviewer 10; Categories 9 to 11). As can be seen in Table 1, these secondary intentions were each further differentiated based on the data.

Interestingly, the secondary interviewer IM intention of distance in terms of superiority indicates that although by definition IM aims at creating favorable impressions, interviewers do not always try to be friendly and build rapport with the applicant. In some cases, interviewers might rather have the intention to signal their status and power (Category 9) or to convey a feeling of uncertainty (Category 11).

How are interviewers' IM intentions interrelated? Data analyses revealed various interrelations between interviewer IM intentions. For instance, the two primary interviewer IM intentions of signaling attractiveness and signaling authenticity were found to constitute two separate dimensions that co-occur with each other as most interviewers reported both intentions simultaneously (e.g., "It's not only about a positive impression but also about a realistic one," Interviewer 15).

Furthermore, we found that all experienced interviewers reported multiple primary and secondary IM intentions, and that some of these intentions seemed synergetic while others

seemed rather incompatible. For example, professional interviewers with the intention of creating an impression of authenticity often also reported the intention of creating an impression of straightforwardness and trustworthiness, such as "There may be companies … that only present the positive and try to mislead people, but with us, that's not the case … I don't want to persuade [the applicant] of something that's not true. One should be truthful, open, transparent. I don't think this is about putting on a show" (Interviewer 3). In contrast, professional interviewers with the intention to signal status and power of decision rarely reported the intention of signaling fairness, which indicates that these intentions may be rather incompatible for interviewers.

What IM behaviors do interviewers apply? We found that interviewers apply a broad range of different IM behaviors that do not only include verbal and paraverbal behaviors but also nonverbal, artifactual, and administrative behaviors.

Verbal interviewer IM. Verbal interviewer IM means that interviewers use the content of what they are saying to favorably influence applicant impressions. As can be seen in Table 2, results suggest that verbal interviewer IM behaviors can be divided into self-focused (i.e., interviewer-focused; Categories 12 to 16), applicant-focused (Categories 17 to 26), fit-focused (Categories 27 and 28), job-, team-, or organization-focused (Categories 29 to 32), and interview process-focused IM behavior (Categories 33 and 34). Additionally, another form of verbal interviewer IM is modifying one's style of communication (Categories 35 to 40), such as modifying the applicants' speech portion, adapting one's vocabulary and dialect to the applicant, and using verbal encouragers (e.g., "mmmh", "ya", "yeah").

Analysis of our in-depth interviews with professional interviewers indicated that to place themselves, their organization, and the job in a favorable light, interviewers are likely to present positive information to the applicant, such as self-enhancement (Category 12), applicant enhancement (Category 19), and enhancement of the job (Category 29). We also found that to induce an impression of honesty and sincerity (i.e., a favorable impression),

Table 2

Verbal Interviewer IM: What Can Interviewers Deliberately Say to Favorably Influence Applicant Impressions? New[a] Behavioral Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM behavior	Definition: To influence applicant impressions, interviewers might…	Links to IM intentions[b]
IM by providing information		
Self-focused		
12. Self-enhancement	make statements demonstrating the possession of desirable qualities (i.e., competence)	1
13. *Demonstrating job knowledge*	make statements demonstrating that they know the job or field of work very well	1
14. *Demonstrating humor*	make jokes or comments that are intended to be funny	3
15. Telling personal stories	tell personal anecdotes	3
16. *Expressing enthusiasm*	make statements demonstrating elation and passion for their work	1
Applicant-focused		
17. *Referring to applicant by name*	address the applicant personally by name	4
18. Demonstrating knowledge of the applicant	provide facts or details regarding the applicant's resume or prior meetings with the applicant (e.g., information gained in a prior interview)	4, 7
19. Applicant-enhancement	compliment, praise, or flatter the applicant	4
20. *Goal setting for the applicant*	explain to the applicant what his/her future in the organization could look like	2, 10
21. *Demonstrating empathy*	make statements demonstrating their understanding of the applicant's experiences or feelings	3, 4
22. *Thanking*	thank the applicant for his/her answers, questions, or for participation in the interview	4
23. Offering support	offer the applicant personal career advice or help and support in case of further questions after the interview	4
24. *Giving voice*	ask the applicant for questions or ask the applicant for feedback about the interview process	4
25. *Challenging*	challenge the applicant through questions, exercises, or by changing the interview language	10
26. *Applicant-depreciation*	make pejorative and provoking comments about the applicant or his/her answers; intimidate the applicant	9, 10

Fit-focused		
27. Fit enhancing	emphasize applicant-job fit through commentaries or questions	4
28. Demonstrating similarity	communicate their own characteristics, opinions, accomplishments, and preferences that are similar to the applicant's ones based on his/her CV (e.g., home city, sports activities)	3
Job-, team-, or organization-focused		
29. *Enhancement of job, team, or organization*	stress strengths or advantages of the job, team, or organization	1
30. *Goal setting for the job, team, or organization*	explain to the applicant what the team's or organization's specific goals are in the future	2, 10
31. *Confessing*	frankly confess negative aspects or disadvantages of the job, team or organization	2, 8, 5
32. *Positive framing*	present negative aspects or advantages in a positive way, e.g. as challenges; give negative aspects a positive spin	1, 2
Interview process-focused		
33. *Enhancement of the interview process*	stress strengths or advantages of the interview process, e.g. timeliness of decisions	6, 7
34. Apologizing	accept responsibility for negative events or problems during the selection process	5, 8
IM through style of communication		
35. *Paraphrasing and summarizing*	rephrase the applicant's statements	4
36. *Verbal encouragement*	use verbal encouragers in response to the applicant's answers	3, 4
37. *Modifying applicant's speech portion*	let the applicant finish speaking or cut the applicant short	m
38. *Modifying one's detailedness of language*	give rather short or rather detailed information and explanations	m
39. *Modifying one's formality of language*	express themselves in a rather formal or in a rather informal way	m
40. *Adapting one's vocabulary and dialect*	adapt their dialect or style of phrasing to the applicant	3

[a] New in comparison to Barrick et al. (2009), Bolino et al. (2008), Levashina and Campion (2007), Ellis et al. (2002), and McFarland et al. (2005).

[b] Category numbers of interviewer IM intentions (see Table 1) to which each IM behavior is most probably linked. m = multipurpose IM behavior in terms of being related to different IM intentions depending on how the IM behavior is applied.

sometimes interviewers intentionally state negative aspects of the company or the job such as, "To be authentic and honest, I indicate weaknesses of the company …, indicate the positive but also weaknesses" (Interviewer 10; Category 31). Furthermore, we found that to signal attractiveness despite negative aspects, interviewers often frame negative information in a positive way (Category 32). For example, a professional interviewer reported, "I personally try to do this in a frank way, in a straightforward way … There are negative aspects regarding the work load but, of course, that results in a higher quality of our [services]. So negative aspects are justified in a positive way" (Interviewer 8).

Paraverbal interviewer IM. Paraverbal interviewer IM refers to interviewers' verbal behaviors other than words that are applied to favorably influence applicant impressions (cf. Barrick et al., 2009; DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999). As depicted in Table 3, we found three different categories of how interviewers modulate their voice when communicating with applicants: speaking in an empathetic way to signal closeness (e.g., "soft and friendly," Observation 1; Category 41), speaking in an authoritative way to signal distance in terms of superiority (e.g., "spoke loudly, … powerful," Applicant 4; Category 42), and speaking in an unobstrusive, neutral way to signal distance in terms of professionalism (e.g., "like I would speak with everybody else," Interviewer 12; Category 43). The finding that interviewers may intentionally talk in an authoritative way provides empirical support for propositions by Gilmore et al. (1999) and Connerley and Rynes (1997), who suggested that interviewers might sometimes have the goal of intimidating applicants.

Nonverbal interviewer IM. Nonverbal interviewer IM means that interviewers use their body language to create favorable impressions on the applicant. As shown in Table 4, we found that interviewers may use nonverbal IM both to create an impression of power and superiority, for example through dynamic gestures (Category 48), and to create an impression of closeness and trust, for example by smiling (Category 45), making eye contact (Category 47), and leaning forward (Category 49). For example, professional interviewers reported,

Table 3

Paraverbal Interviewer IM: How Can Interviewers Deliberately Use Their Voice to Favorably Influence Applicant Impressions? New[a] Behavioral Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM behavior	Definition: To influence applicant impressions, interviewers might…	Links to IM intentions[b]
41. *Speaking in an empathetic way*	speak with the applicant in a gentle, caring way (e.g., low pace and low volume)	3, 4
42. *Speaking in an authoritative way*	speak with the applicant in a redoubtable, imperious way (e.g., low pitch and high volume)	9
43. *Speaking in an unobtrusive way*	speak with the applicant in a common, ordinary way, just like they would do in any other situation (e.g., moderate pace, moderate volume, and moderate pitch)	8

[a] New in comparison to Barrick et al. (2009), Bolino et al. (2008), DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999), and McFarland et al. (2005).
[b] Category numbers of interviewer IM intentions (see Table 1) to which each IM behavior is most probably linked.

"Maybe chuckling with the candidates to make sure it's casual and comfortable" (Interviewer 7). In addition, data indicated that nonverbal interviewer IM can also be applied in the form of body contact. This includes not only handshakes (Category 52), as suggested by applicant IM research (e.g., McFarland et al., 2005), but also friendly backslaps (Category 53), for example at the end of the interview. Furthermore, we found that interviewers apply elements of empathetic listening (cf., Bodie, 2011) to influence applicant impressions, such as mirroring the applicant's posture (Category 50) and nodding affirmatively (Category 46). Data also revealed that a lack of empathetic listening may serve as IM (i.e., doing something unrelated to the conduct of the interview, Category 54). To irritate applicants and convey superiority, some interviewers intentionally avoided eye contact, for example by paging through documents or looking out of the window while applicants were talking. For example, a professional interviewer stated "Putting on a poker face, well, I try to restrain myself" (Interviewer 7).

Table 4

Nonverbal Interviewer IM: How Can Interviewers Deliberately Use Body Language to Favorably Influence Applicant Impressions? New[a] Behavioral Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM behavior	Definition: To influence applicant impressions, interviewers might…	Links to IM intentions[b]
Nonverbal IM towards the applicant		
44. *Laughing*	giggle or laugh out loud	3
45. Smiling	smile at the applicant	3
46. Nodding affirmatively	nod in response to the applicant's responses	4
47. Making eye contact	make eye contact with the applicant	3, 4
48. Making hand gestures	use dynamic hand gestures to stress their statements	9
49. Leaning forward	lean forward towards the applicant	3
50. *Mirroring*	mirror the applicant's posture	3
51. *Note taking*	take notes about the applicant's answers	4, 7
52. Shaking hands	shake hands with the applicant	3, 4
53. *Backslapping*	slap the applicant on the back in a friendly or appreciative way	3, 4
54. *Doing something else*	pursue other activities than asking questions or taking notes (e.g., looking through documents)	11
Nonverbal IM towards other interviewers		
55. *Smiling*	smile at other interviewers	1
56. *Nodding affirmatively*	nod in response to other interviewers' questions	1
57. *Mirroring*	mirror other interviewers' postures	1

[a] New in comparison to DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999), McFarland et al. (2005), and Peeters and Lievens (2006).
[b] Category numbers of interviewer IM intentions (see Table 1) to which each IM behavior is most probably linked.

Artifactual interviewer IM. Artifactual interviewer IM refers to how interviewers use "an object made by a person" (Hornby & Wehmeier, 2005, p. 72), such as manipulating professional, status, and aesthetic cues to influence applicant impressions (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Schneider, 1981). As can be seen in Table 5, we found that interviewers use four different kinds of artifacts to create favorable images: aspects of their appearance (Categories 58 and 59), premises appearance (Categories 60 to 66), visual information displayed during the interview (Categories 67 to 70), and giveaways for applicants (Categories 71 to 73).

First, consistent with applicant IM taxonomies, interviewers reported that they modify their clothing (Category 58) and accessories (Category 59) to influence impressions. However, in contrast to applicants, interviewers were found to also consider the appearance of the interview building (Category 60), interview room (Category 62), and the seating arrangement (Category 66) as a very important IM tool. For instance, a professional interviewer said, "A conference room … portraying the department, that certainly has a more positive impact than if one gets the impression that it's a chilly cubbyhole" (Interviewer 7; Category 67). Additionally, regarding the seating arrangement, sitting kitty-corner may aim to create impressions of closeness (e.g., "then he [the applicant] certainly doesn't feel so exposed … not like being before the court," Interviewer 8), while sitting face-to-face may aim to signal power and performance expectations (e.g., "it's always been face-to-face… a typical exam situation," Applicant 1).

Second, we found that interviewers provide applicants with visual information during the interview to convey favorable images. For instance, professional interviewers reported to intentionally display applicants' application documents on the table (Category 68), sometimes marked in bright colors, to signal how much effort they are investing in choosing a candidate.

Finally, an aspect that has not been considered in past research is that interviewers may hand out giveaways and promotional items to applicants, such as informational material

Table 5

Artifactual Interviewer IM: How Can Interviewers Deliberately Use Appearance, Visual Information, and Presents to Favorably Influence Applicant Impressions? Newa Behavioral Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM behavior	Definition: To influence applicant impressions, interviewers might…	Links to IM intentions[b]
IM through interviewer appearance		
58. Modifying one's clothing	choose to wear rather formal or rather casual clothing	m
59. Modifying one's accessories	choose to wear rather precious or rather casual accessories	m
IM through premises appearance		
60. *Choosing the interview building*	choose a favorable building for the interview	1
61. *Choosing the interview room*	choose a favorable room for the interview, e.g. a conference room	1
62. *Decorating the interview room*	decorate the interview room, e.g. by choosing flowers	1
63. *Checking the light intensity*	ensure appropriate light intensity inside the interview room	3
64. *Choosing the interview table*	choose an interview table of a favorable form and size	3
65. *Choosing the seating furniture*	choose favorable seating furniture, e.g. armchairs	3
66. *Placement of seating furniture*	choose a favorable seating arrangement, e.g. sitting vis-à-vis	3
IM through visual information		
67. *Showing printed information material*	show printed information material to the applicant, e.g. presentation slides, organigrams, or brochures	1, 7
68. *Displaying application documents*	display application documents on the interview table	4, 7
69. *Displaying notes taken prior to the interview*	display notes they have taken prior to the interview	4, 7
70. *Displaying test results*	display test results on the table	6, 7
IM through promotional items		
71. *Handing out printed information material*	hand out printed information material to the applicant, e.g. presentation slides, organigrams, or brochures	1, 4
72. *Handing out presents*	hand out presents to the applicant, e.g. sweets or a pen	1, 4
73. *Handing out one's business card*	hand out their business card to the applicant	4, 5

[a] New in comparison to Barrick et al. (2009), DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999), and Schneider (1981).

[b] Category numbers of interviewer IM intentions (see Table 1) to which each IM behavior is most probably linked. m = multipurpose IM behavior in terms of being related to different IM intentions depending on how the IM behavior is applied.

(e.g., “handing out brochures”, Interviewer 7; Category 71), presents (e.g., “The applicant is given a solar charger as a present at the end of the interview”, Observation 2; Category 72), and business cards (“Most important to me is exchanging business cards”, Interviewer 2; Category 73). These items can convey appreciation and help to stick in the applicant’s memory.

Administrative interviewer IM. While collecting and analyzing data, we noticed that many interviewers were telling us about how they time their communication and provide services to applicants to influence applicant impressions (see Table 6). We called this type of interviewer IM “administrative” because it refers to behaviors connected with organizing the interview. Regarding timing of communication (Categories 74 to 78), our study goes beyond existing work on pre-interview communication (cf. Carless & Hetherington, 2011) by showing that interviewers may intentionally ensure timeliness in order to create positive applicant impressions. For instance, one professional interviewer said, “I think in a way it’s appreciation … So it’s fatal when somebody from the line management is late for the interview” (Interviewer 8).

Concerning administrative interviewer IM by providing services to applicants (Categories 79 to 98), our data suggest that many aspects of conducting interviews that have been understood as standard elements in previous research may actually aim at creating positive impressions on applicants. For example, professional interviewers reported sending confirmations of receipt of application documents to applicants (Category 79) to convey professionalism and appreciation.

In addition, interviewers seem to provide services for IM purposes not only during the interview, but also beforehand and subsequently. For instance, to create an impression of closeness before the actual interview, interviewers may call and invite applicants personally instead of asking somebody else to extend an invitation (Category 81): “I prefer a personal

telephone call. That makes a completely different impression than an anonymous e-mail …When I talk to the person by telephone, it seems much more significant" (Interviewer 11).

During the interview, offering drinks (Category 90), breaks (Category 91), site visits (Category 93), and refund of travel expenses (Category 94) can be considered as IM, if these service features serve as signals to the applicant (i.e., signals of appreciation). For instance, one professional interviewer reported, "I offer something to drink. Often they [the applicants] don't even have the courage to pour the water themselves. Then I do that as well" (Interviewer 3). However, interviewers may also intentionally choose not to offer certain drinks in order to signal professionalism, such as "I don't serve any coffee … I want to lay emphasis on professionalism because to me, a selection interview is not an afternoon coffee party" (Interviewer 10).

After the interview, interviewers were found to influence applicant impressions by modifying their way of giving feedback to applicants about interview results (e.g., by providing feedback by telephone instead of by e-mail, Category 97). For example, a professional interviewer told us, "Usually I do that orally. Communicating that we decided to choose somebody else, I try to do that orally, if possible" (Interviewer 3).

When do interviewers apply which IM behaviors? Our analyses revealed that interviewers apply different IM behaviors depending on their IM intentions. These links between interviewer IM intentions and behaviors are displayed in Tables 2 to 6. First, we found that most of the IM behaviors are used with a certain purpose, that is, there is a clear link between each of these IM behaviors and a single IM intention. For example, enhancement of the job, team, or organization (Category 29) is used with the intention to signal attractiveness (Category 1), whereas demonstrating humor (Category 14) is used with the intention to signal individuality and appreciation (Category 4). Second, some IM behaviors are related to multiple IM intentions at the same time. For instance, positive framing (Category 32) may be used to signal both attractiveness (Category 1) and authenticity

Table 6

Administrative Interviewer IM: How Can Interviewers Deliberately Provide Services and Use Timing of Communication to Favorably Influence Applicant Impressions? New[a] Behavioral Categories Are Printed in Italics

IM behavior	Definition: To influence applicant impressions, interviewers might…	Links to IM intentions[b]
IM through timing of communication		
74. *Ensuring timeliness of pre-interview communication*	try to respond swiftly to applicants' e-mails or telephone calls	4, 8
75. *Modifying timeliness of interview start*	ensure a punctual interview start or make the applicant wait	m
76. *Modifying interview length*	prolong or shorten the duration of the interview	m
77. *Ensuring timeliness of feedback*	try to give swift feedback to applicants	4, 8
78. *Offering time to think it over*	offer the applicant time to think about a job offer	4
IM by providing services to applicants		
Before the interview		
79. *Confirming receipt of application*	send a written confirmation of receipt of the application to the applicant	4
80. *Giving directions*	give a description to the applicant how to get to the interview location	8
81. *Inviting the applicant personally*	extend the invitation to the interview by themselves (as opposed to asking somebody else to do so)	4, 7
82. *Inviting the applicant by telephone*	extend the invitation to the interview by telephone (as opposed to by mail or e-mail)	4
83. *Accommodating with the interview date*	incorporate the applicant's date and time preferences for the interview	4, 7
84. *Accommodating with the interview location*	incorporate the applicant's location preferences for the interview	4, 7
85. *Preventing interruptions*	prevent interruptions of the interview (e.g., turning of their mobile phone or placing a sign outside the door)	4
86. *Modifying the room temperature*	increase or decrease heating or air conditioning to ensure a comfortable room temperature	3
87. *Airing*	air the interview room to ensure fresh air	3

During the interview

88.	*Approaching the applicant*	step up to the applicant when welcoming him/her as opposed to letting the applicant step up to themselves	4
89.	*Taking the applicant's jacket*	offer to take the applicant's jacket or coat	3, 4
90.	*Offering drinks*	offer the applicant a drink, such as water or coffee	3, 4
91.	*Offering a break*	offer the applicant to have a break during the interview	3, 4
92.	*Incorporating future colleagues*	make potential future colleagues of the applicant join the interview	2, 7
93.	*Offering a site visit*	offer the applicant a visit of the potential future workplace	2, 7
94.	*Offering refund of travel expenses*	offer the applicant a refund of the travel expenses related to the interview	4, 7
95.	*Escorting*	escort the applicant to the elevator or the exit of the building	4

After the interview

96.	*Giving feedback personally*	give the applicant feedback by themselves (as opposed to asking somebody else do so)	4, 7
97.	*Giving feedback orally*	give the applicant feedback by telephone or in person (as opposed to by mail or e-mail)	4
98.	*Giving detailed feedback*	give the applicant detailed feedback (as opposed to no or brief feedback)	4, 7

[a] New in comparison to Barrick et al. (2009), Bolino et al. (2008), DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999), and McFarland et al. (2005).

[b] Category numbers of interviewer IM intentions (see Table 1) to which each IM behavior is most probably linked. m = multipurpose IM behavior in terms of being related to different IM intentions depending on how the IM behavior is applied.

(Category 2), and the IM behavior of incorporating future colleagues (Category 92) may be used to signal both authenticity (Category 2) and selection complexity and effort (Category 7). Third, the remaining IM behaviors can be described as being multipurpose, that is, they can be related to different IM intentions depending on how they are applied. For example, interviewers can modify applicants' speech portion (Category 37) in a way that the portion is high to signal appreciation (Category 4), or in a way that the portion is low to signal status and power of decision (Category 9).

Furthermore, on the basis of our observational data, we found that those IM behaviors that are linked to the same IM intention are most likely to be applied in combination. For instance, if an interviewer aims to signal individuality and appreciation (Category 4), IM behaviors such as referring to the applicant by name (Category 17), demonstrating empathy (Category 21), speaking in an empathetic way (Category 41), nodding affirmatively (Category 46), handing out presents (Category 72), escorting (Category 95), and giving detailed feedback (Category 98) tend to be combined. In contrast, IM behaviors that are related to hardly compatible IM intentions are unlikely to be combined. For example, as described above, the intention to signal fairness (Category 6) and the intention to signal status and decision power (Category 9) were hardly mentioned by the same interviewers. Thus, applicant depreciation (Category 26), which is likely to be used to signal status and power of decision, and enhancement of the interview process (Category 33), which is likely to be used to signal fairness, should rarely occur together.

Furthermore, our analyses revealed that the use of IM behaviors might depend on the interviewer's industry sector. For instance, one professional interviewer stated that regarding the way how interviewers apply IM, "banks, private enterprises, industry, health sector, they're poles apart!" (Interviewer 12). In addition, when we compared professional interviewers from the army with professional interviewers from human health services, we found that those from the army reported more intentions to signal authenticity and

performance expectations to create a realistic image and enhance applicants' self-selection. This is in line with the army's tough image and clear command structure. In contrast, professional interviewers from the human health services such as hospitals put more emphasis on signaling attractiveness by reinforcing the job's and advantages of their respective hospital (Category 29), and put more emphasis on signaling closeness, for example by stepping up to the applicant before the interview (Category 88). As hospitals are service providers, these interviewers were also much more concerned about applicants' future consumer behavior (Category 107) in terms of choosing their hospital if they require treatment. Thus, an interviewer's industry sector is likely to influence the specific set of IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes that is applied.

Additionally, we found that there are some interviewer IM behaviors that can only be applied in certain interview settings such as panel interviews. Specifically, regarding nonverbal IM, interviewers were found to intentionally smile at other interviewers (Category 55), nod in response to other interviewers' questions (Category 56), and mirror other interviewers' body postures (Category 57) to induce an impression of harmony, and signal positive corporate climate. These findings suggest that panel interviews may offer interviewers additional possibilities for influencing applicant impressions.

What is more, interviewers may change their IM intentions and behaviors over the course of the interview. For instance regarding paraverbal IM, professional interviewers and applicants reported that interviewers tend to speak in an empathetic way (Category 41) at the beginning and end of interviews, and when asking delicate questions. In contrast, interviewers tend to speak in an authoritative way (Category 42) when asking challenging questions. For example, professional interviewers reported, "I ask questions rather snappily" (Interviewer 7), and "When I want to hear an answer, then I express myself in a very bald way, then I'm not welcoming anymore" (Interviewer 11). This suggests that the way how interviewers apply IM might depend on the timing in the interview and on the content of the conversation.

Why Interviewers Apply IM

What are interviewers' intended IM outcomes? To examine why interviewers apply IM, we asked professional interviewers and experienced applicants about their experiences and assumptions on intended IM outcomes. As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 7, our data revealed that interviewers try to influence applicant impressions in order to enhance many different outcomes relevant to organizations, applicants, and interviewers themselves.

First, interviewer IM may be applied to improve the organizations' image and reputation (e.g., by signaling attractiveness, trustworthiness, and straightforwardness, Category 100), and recruiting success in terms of filling vacancies fast and in a sustained manner (Category 99). For example, a professional interviewer reported, "Ideally, in the end the applicant says 'They did not hire me, but this is a GOOD company.' That's the goal" (Interviewer 12).

Second, professional interviewers reported that they applied IM to influence outcomes related to applicants, such as ensuring that applicants leave the interview room feeling good about themselves (e.g., by signaling individuality and appreciation; Category 101 and 102), and improving applicants' attitudes towards the organization (e.g., by signaling attractiveness, Category 103 and 104). For instance, a professional interviewer reported, "To give the applicant a positive feeling, even in situations where it's clear that the candidate is not qualified … So that the applicant gets an impression of the company, what we do, what we stand for, particularly the positive we stand for, and has a positive attitude towards us" (Interviewer 7).

Third, our interview data revealed that interviewers also apply IM to influence outcomes related to themselves, such as their reputation as an interviewer (Category 110) and their own career (Category 111). For instance, a professional interviewer told us, "Well, I'm well known because of my reputation … I'm one of the most ruthless ones in our HR department" (Interviewer 2). So far, interview research has primarily focused on outcomes

Table 7

Intended Interviewer IM Outcomes: What Do Interiewers Want to Achieve by Deliberately Sending Signals To Applicants? New[a] Outcome Categories Are Printed in Italics

Intended IM Outcome		**Definition: By deliberately sending signals to applicants, interviewers might want to…**
Outcomes related to organizations		
99.	Recruiting success	fill the vacancy fast and in a sustained manner
100.	Organizational image and reputation	create and maintain a favorable image of the organization in the job market and in the general public
Outcomes related to applicants		
Positive emotions		
101.	Affective state	induce pleasant emotions in applicants
102.	Self-esteem	induce positive applicant evaluations of themselves such as feelings of self-worth
Positive attitudes towards the organization		
103.	Job-organization attraction	attract applicants to the organization and the job opening
104.	*Identification with the organization*	make the applicant identify with the organization's culture and values
Positive intentions and behaviors towards the organization		
105.	Job choice intention and behavior	make the applicant accept a potential job offer
106.	Recommendation intention and behavior	make the applicant recommend the organizations to others looking for a job
107.	Consumer intention and behavior	make the applicant buy products or services of the organization
108.	Reapplication intention and behavior	make the applicant apply if he or she does not get a job offer
109.	Forbearance of legal action	make the applicant refrain from suing the company or pursuing other steps of legal action
Outcomes related to interviewers themselves		
110.	*Interviewer reputation*	build a favorable reputation as an interview such as being appreciative, objective, and professional
111.	*Interviewer career*	boost their chances of advancement in their organization

[a] New in comparison to Chapman et al. (2005) and Hausknecht et al. (2004).

related to the organization and to applicants (Dipboye et al., 2012), so these findings add a new aspect to interview research by stressing interviewers' aims. Intended interviewer IM outcomes such as interviewer reputation and career success indicate that professional interviewers have certain self-centered motives and career goals in mind when they interact with applicants.

When are interviewers' intended IM outcomes likely to be reached? Our results indicate that the outcome components of our conceptual model intertwine in a complex pattern. For instance, outcomes related to applicants seem to be particularly important for the effectiveness of interviewer IM as applicant outcomes may serve as mediators to reach other more distal outcomes. While applicants immediately react to the interview in terms of their emotional states, their attitudes and their intentions towards the company, outcomes related to the organization and to the interviewer are influenced by these applicant reactions. For instance, an organization's recruitment success partly depends on how applicants experience the interview process and spread the word, such as "When he goes home with positive emotions then he'll tell others about it, he'll tell his friends and other people he knows, and hopefully these others will apply, too" (Interviewer 7). Similarly, if an interviewer achieves good acceptance rates and gets positive feedback from applicants, this should have a favorable impact on the interviewer's career. Thus, interviewers' IM effectiveness may primarily depend on applicant-related outcomes as a first step to eventually enhance their organizations' success and their own reputation and career success.

In addition, while the same cumulative results (e.g., a certain organizational image) may be arrived at through many different combinations of interviewer IM behaviors, a critical success factor seems to be whether interviewers apply a well-balanced combination of IM behaviors. For instance, many professional interviewers reported that in their experience, signaling attractiveness is not enough to attract and retain applicants, and may even backfire if

used extensively. Thus, deliberately sending signals of attractiveness seems to be most promising when combined with signals of authenticity, closeness, and distance.

Discussion

Previous research on IM in interviews has been fruitful, but this literature has lacked a conceptual model to aid in understanding how and why interviewers try to create favorable impressions on applicants. Instead, previous work has been based on the assumption that interviewers use the same IM behaviors as applicants without acknowledging what intentions and opportunities interviewers actually have when they interact with applicants. Thus, as a response to repeated calls for research on interviewer IM (e.g., Dipboye & Johnson, 2013; Gilmore et al., 1999; Macan, 2009), our study offers a new perspective on the selection interview by systematically examining interviewer IM. At a practical level, these insights can be applied in interviewer training to enhance organizations' recruiting outcomes. Following a grounded theory approach, we identified *how* interviewers apply IM in terms of what they intend to signal to applicants (i.e., interviewer IM intentions) and which signals interviewers deliberately use to create their intended impressions (i.e., interviewer IM behaviors). Furthermore, we examined *why* interviewers apply IM in terms of the outcomes they want to achieve by deliberately sending signals to applicants (i.e., intended interviewer IM outcomes).

We developed a conceptual model of interviewer IM that comprises interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes. In addition to the model, we generated an extensive taxonomy of 111 different interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and outcomes. Specifically, we found that interviewers' primary intentions are to signal attractiveness and authenticity, while their secondary intentions are to signal closeness and distance (i.e., distance in terms of professionalism and in terms of superiority). Another finding was that interviewer IM may have different aims – aims in terms of creating a certain impression of the interviewer as a person, an impression of the job, of the team, and of the organization as a whole. In order to create these impressions on applicants, interviewers may deliberately apply

a broad spectrum of signals such as verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal, artifactual, and administrative IM behaviors. Additionally, we found that interviewers use IM behaviors in order to improve a wide range of different outcomes relevant to organizations, applicants, and interviewers themselves.

Implications for Theory

This study makes at least four important contributions to the literature. First, this study elaborates signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) in the context of interviewer behavior by presenting a conceptual model on the main elements of deliberate signaling processes on the side of the interviewer. Notably, this model not only focuses on IM behaviors, but also includes interviewer IM intentions, and intended outcomes, which are particularly important to understand the phenomenon of interviewer IM (Dipboye et al., 2012). In addition, as a response to calls to study signals and incentives of signalers within their social context (Connelly et al., 2011), we present an extensive taxonomy of the impressions that interviewers aim to create, the signals they deliberately use to create these intended impressions, and outcomes they want to achieve. As such, we found that interviewers' intentions and signals are very broad and complex, and we revealed numerous aspects that go clearly beyond those assumed by previous IM research (see Tables 1 to 7). Regarding interviewers' signaling incentives, interviewers deliberately use signaling behaviors not only to enhance organizations' recruitment success and applicants' affective reactions, but also to enhance outcomes that are directly related to themselves such as their reputation as an interviewer and career opportunities.

Second, past research has made a clear distinction between positive interviewer characteristics, such as informativeness and trustworthiness (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005), and negative ones, such as unfriendliness and intimidation (e.g., Carless & Imber, 2007; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). However, the present study shows that such distinctions might be too simplistic. For example, interviewers' intentions to sell the organization and the job are likely

to be related to secondary intentions like conveying superiority and dominance. Thus, interviewers may sometimes take a detour during the interview by intentionally sending signals that might seem negative, but may eventually enhance perceived attractiveness, for example, by intimidating and depreciating applicants to signal high competitiveness.

Third, this study sheds light on how interviewers' and applicants' IM are similar and distinct. Consistent with interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), the present findings show that while applicant and interviewer IM share similarities, there is a broad range of differences. Similarities can be found, for example, in categories of verbal IM (e.g., fit-focused IM), nonverbal IM (e.g., smiling), and artifactual IM behaviors (e.g., modifying one's appearance). However, in contrast to assumptions in previous studies (e.g., Stevens et al., 1990), many IM intentions and behaviors seem to be distinct from applicant IM. Unlike applicants, interviewers may have multiple aims of IM (e.g., influencing applicant impressions of the job, the organization, and themselves) and may have diverse IM intentions that go well beyond mere friendliness (e.g., signaling distance).

Another difference is that, because interviewers are in a more powerful position than applicants, they may apply IM behaviors such as applicant-depreciation and challenging applicants to signal their superiority. Also, as another consequence of interviewers' more powerful position, they have a greater freedom of action than applicants and are therefore able to control and modify diverse artifactual (e.g., providing giveaways) and administrative aspects of the interview (e.g., inviting the applicant personally) to favorably influence applicant impressions. Therefore, because of these differences, interviewer IM should be considered a phenomenon that may be related to, but is nevertheless quite distinct from applicant IM.

Fourth, our results suggest a shift in the way that we think about interviewers in the employment interview. For instance, our study draws attention to the social nature of the interview and contributes to a more person-centric picture of the interviewer (following

suggestions by Weiss & Rupp, 2011). We found that interviewers are well aware that they may influence applicant impressions and explicitly state their aims to do so. Interviewers know very well which specific impressions they want applicants to form and intentionally use a broad range of different signals to create these intended impressions. Our findings support efforts by other researchers to enhance the theoretical understanding and the quality of the interview as an assessment tool by acknowledging social exchange processes in the interview, such as interviewer IM (cf. Dipboye et al., 2012; Melchers et al., in press).

Potential Limitations

Although this study provides valuable insights into how and why interviewers try to create favorable impressions on applicants, it has its limitations. One limitation is that even though the application of a qualitative approach can lead to new research questions and new perspectives (Cassell & Symon, 2011), the generalizability of the findings might be limited because of small sample sizes (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999). Moreover, the present study was conducted in Germany and Switzerland. Interviewer IM intentions and behaviors may vary between different national cultures, as it has been found for applicant IM (e.g., König, Hafsteinsson, Jansen, & Stadelmann, 2011). Hence, more research on interviewer IM with additional samples is clearly needed. However, the present study used different types of samples (professional interviewers and experienced applicants) and multiple qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, observations, memos, and analyses of informational material) to generate a comprehensive list of interviewer IM behaviors. In addition, data were collected until theoretical saturation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Taken together, the diversity of samples and methods and reaching theoretical saturation suggest that these results may generalize to other interview contexts.

Implications for Future Research

This study raises important questions about interviewer IM that could be examined in the future. Specifically, the range of interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and intended

outcomes in our model is conceptually rich and generates promising directions for future research. We see this general nature of our model as a strength as it allows for flexibility in developing a range of specific ideas and testing specific relationships among any variables representing the main components of the model. To provide directions for future research, we present several avenues for theory-driven research on interviewer IM.

In order to give advice to interviewers about how to increase their recruiting success, researchers need to acknowledge differences between different types of interviewers. Thus, it is particularly important to further examine what factors influence the use of interviewer IM behaviors such as interviewers' selection versus recruitment focus. On the basis of the insights gained in this study, we suspect that IM behaviors that are more aligned with the interview's selection purpose (e.g., signaling distance in terms of superiority) are used more frequently by interviewers who focus more on selection than recruitment and who are faced with a low selection ratio in terms of a high number of applicants per vacancy. Furthermore, it would be interesting if future research found tactics that are especially effective for selection instead of recruitment purposes (and vice versa).

Our findings also suggest that research on applicant IM should broaden its focus. For instance, research on applicant IM has almost exclusively focused on applicants' intentions to convey attractiveness. However, it seems likely that applicants apply more sophisticated strategies to positively influence interviewer ratings that have been found in the context of organizations, such as creating an impression of modesty (Wosinska, 1996) and sympathy (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Furthermore, this study revealed many different types of IM behaviors that have not been considered yet in applicant IM research. Specifically, applicants might apply forms of administrative IM by politely confirming their interview date or by proactively calling the interviewer to ask for the status of their application.

In addition, this research raises the question of how interviewer IM relates to interviewers' truthfulness towards applicants. While IM has sometimes been criticized for

being deceptive (i.e., deliberate distortion of information to create favorable impressions, cf. Levashina & Campion, 2007), our results highlight interviewers' intention to create impressions of honesty and trustworthiness on applicants. In this regard, we believe that interviewer IM can be honest or deceptive depending on whether the signal being sent to an applicant relates to an existing attribute of the interviewer, the job, or the organization instead of being misleading in terms of creating false impressions. In line with recent suggestions by Tsai and Huang (2014), we see a high potential in honest interviewer IM to increase organizations' long-term recruitment success, but a severe risk in deceptive interviewer IM by leading to negative long-term consequences such as poor person-job fit and unrealistic expectations on the side of the applicant, which may lead to psychological contract breach. Future research should therefore examine to what extent interviewers distort information to create favorable applicant impressions, and which factors influence whether interviewers use deceptive instead of honest IM. For example, based on our findings, we would suspect that interviewers who focus on short-term outcomes (e.g., filling the vacancy as fast as possible) should be tempted to use deceptive IM while interviewers who focus on long-term outcomes (e.g., filling the vacancy in a sustained manner) should tend to use honest IM.

Finally, another important question raised by this study is in what way interviewer IM may affect interview validity. One possibility is that interviewers' attempts to influence applicants' impressions such as enhancement of the organization might bias information derived from applicants and hence prevent interviewers from accurately assessing applicant performance (Dipboye et al., 2012). As such, Marr and Cable (2014) found that interviewers' selling orientation reduced the accuracy and predictive validity of their judgments. However, another possibility is that interviewer IM behavior such as confessing negative aspects and demonstrating empathy facilitates effective recruiting by meeting applicant expectations to obtain information in interviews and to be given attention (Derous, Born, & De Witte, 2004). Thus, research is needed to understand whether interviewer IM behaviors influence interview

validity, and if so, which kinds of interviewer IM behaviors are most likely to have negative or positive effects.

Implications for Practice

Given that the interview remains the most popular selection method used by organizations, interviewer IM is a topic of high practical relevance. One important question for interview practice is whether interviewer IM may lead to applicant discrimination. Since applicant IM has been seen as a potential source of measurement bias (e.g., Anderson, 1991), interviewer IM could similarly affect fairness issues. For instance, not every applicant might be treated in the same way because interviewer IM intentions and behaviors are likely to depend on perceived qualifications of an applicant or applicant-job fit, applicants' physical attractiveness, or the similarity between interviewer and applicant. As a consequence, interview conditions might vary across applicants. Therefore, it seems important that interviewers are aware of their tendency to influence applicant impressions. They should make sure that their IM does not prevent them from accurately assessing applicants' performance (Marr & Cable, 2014). A possible solution would be to differentiate interview sections designated for the purpose of selection from interview sections designated for the purpose of recruitment, similar to the idea of the multimodal employment interview by Schuler and Funke (1989).

Another highly relevant aspect is that attracting the best applicants might become increasingly difficult over the next 15 years because it seems likely that economic and demographic factors might increase labor market shortages (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), at least in certain sectors. Thus, proactively managing applicant impressions during the interview process may be a possibility for organizations to attract applicants, as has been suggested regarding organizational IM (Highhouse, Brooks, & Gregarus, 2009). To maximize organizations' recruitment success with the fewest resources, interviewers could be trained to apply effective IM behaviors, similar to suggestions by Chapman et al. (2005)

regarding interviewer personableness. In sum, while interviewers should appreciate potential dangers, an understanding of interviewer IM may move interviewers closer to successfully selecting and recruiting applicants.

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Chapter 2

Selling and Smooth-Talking as Recruitment Tools?

Differential Signaling Effects of Interviewer Impression Management

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Abstract

Prior research suggests that perceived interviewer characteristics such as competence and interest in the applicant play a key role in attracting applicants. However, our theoretical understanding of the signals that interviewers use to induce these perceptions is limited. Drawing from signaling theory and impression management (IM) research, this article argues that interviewer IM behaviors (i.e., self-promotion and ingratiation) have differential effects on applicants' perceptions of interviewer characteristics (i.e., competence and interest in the applicant) that, in turn, influence outcomes such as applicant attraction and applicant self-perceptions. A longitudinal field study of 110 selection interviews that were videotaped and behaviorally coded showed that applicants perceived interviewers as more competent when they used more self-promotion, and as more interested in the applicant when they used more ingratiation. Furthermore, interviewer self-promotion indirectly influenced applicant attraction after the interview through its effects on perceived interviewer competence. Interviewer ingratiation indirectly influenced applicants' self-perceptions after the interview through its effects on perceived interviewer interest in the applicant. These indirect effects even occurred after controlling for applicants' initial attraction and self-perceptions before the interview. Our findings contribute to an integrated understanding of signaling processes initiated by interviewers.

Over the last three decades, scholars in the field of recruitment have made a sustained effort to provide conclusive evidence for the key role that interviewers play in attracting and retaining applicants (Breaugh, 2013). Past research has consistently confirmed that perceived interviewer characteristics such as competence and showing interest in the applicant have a positive influence on companies' and universities' recruiting outcomes (Carless & Imber, 2007; Harris & Fink, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). The reasoning underlying this research is based on signaling theory (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Spence, 1973), which proposes that the social interaction inherent in the interview creates an ideal situation for applicants to observe the interviewer as a representative of the organization and to generalize these observations to the organization as a whole (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991).

Despite this progress, several issues remain unresolved in theorizing about applicant perceptions of interviewer characteristics and outcomes of the interview process. Given the dominance of signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) in recruitment research, one of the main shortcomings in understanding the interplay between interviewers and applicants centers around the actual signals that interviewers use to induce favorable applicant perceptions. For example, Breaugh (2013) recently pointed this out with regard to "finding that a recruiter's being viewed as competent has beneficial effects, an open question is – what factors result in being viewed as more competent?" (p. 405). In this quest of knowledge about interviewer behaviors, scholars have recently proposed that the concept of impression management (IM), which has been defined as conscious or unconscious attempts to influence images others gain during social interaction (Schlenker, 1980), is likely to be a crucial missing piece in this puzzle (Bangerter et al., 2012; Tsai, Huang, & Lieu, 2009; Wilhelmy, Kleinmann, Melchers, & König, 2012, April). Furthermore, prior recruitment research has mainly limited its focus on applicant attraction outcomes such as organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention (e.g., Chen, Hsu, & Tsai, 2013). However, the range of recruitment criterion measures needs to be expanded to gain a broader understanding of how interviewers

influence recruitment processes, for example by considering applicant well-being and self-perceptions (Hausknecht, 2014).

To advance signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), our study integrates the concept of IM into recruitment research and thus provides insights into the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers. We argue that it is crucial to recognize the importance of interviewer IM as a key predictor of perceived interviewer characteristics. In addition, we incorporate a broad range of different recruitment outcome variables to capture differential effects of interviewer IM and to thus enhance our understanding of the complex consequences interviewers' signals may have. In doing so, this study also takes applicants' initial perceptions and intentions before the interview into account to lay emphasis on the actual change in recruitment outcome criteria that takes place due to interviewer IM.

Our study provides several important theoretical advances to the interview and recruitment literature. On the basis of a longitudinal study with observational data from operational interviews for a selective study program, we elaborate signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) in the interview context by considering the actual signals that are sent by interviewers and by examining how interviewer IM behaviors influence perceived interviewer characteristics. Furthermore, we expand previous theoretical frameworks on IM by providing new evidence on how two different kinds of interviewer IM behaviors (i.e., self-promotion and ingratiation) trigger two different signaling mechanisms (i.e., selling and inducing liking) and result in a broad range of consequences (i.e., applicant attraction and self-perceptions). By shedding light on these differential effects of interviewer IM, our study is an important step toward a more nuanced understanding of how interviewer IM serves as a signal that is perceived and interpreted by applicants in the recruitment process. From a practical point of view, as interviewer IM is a variable that is within the control of interviewers, this study is a crucial prerequisite to provide specific recommendations to

organizations and interviewers about what they can do to increase certain outcomes of their interview processes.

Recruitment Purpose of the Employment Interview

While face-to-face interviews continue to be one of the most commonly applied selection tools, they have generally both selection and recruitment purposes. By definition, interviews consist of a communication between an individual who seeks employment and an organizational representative (Dipboye & Johnson, 2013). Consequently, not only do interviewers assess the suitability of applicants, but applicants also evaluate the attractiveness of their prospective employer. As attraction of qualified applicants is viewed as a growing source of competitive advantage, organizations are willing to pay more and more attention to how applicants feel and react to the interview process (Tsai & Huang, 2014).

Organizations place high value on recruitment outcomes of the interview process because their success is closely tied to the individuals who are attracted and eventually hired (Dineen & Soltis, 2010). Negative reactions to selection procedures affect applicants' attitudes toward the organization, make applicants view prospective employers as less attractive, and reduce their intentions to accept a potential job offer (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Furthermore, dissatisfied applicants might be less likely to apply to the organization once more, might advise others against an application, and might even be willing to bring forth legal complaints and lawsuits (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Thus, the interview process itself provides the leverage point for employers and interviewers as they can choose how to treat applicants and how to present themselves (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012).

Furthermore, Breaugh (2013) argued that in recruitment research, it is crucial to expand the range of criterion measures to also include criteria such as applicants' affective states and self-efficacy regarding their interview performance. The rationale for this call is that applicants' affective reactions are an important element in forming an impression of an

employer (Hausknecht, 2014). In particular, these affective reactions after the interview might be salient for applicants as an indicator of whether they felt comfortable and understood during the interview.

Figure 1 depicts our conceptual model that aims at providing an answer to the key question of which interviewer behaviors serve as appropriate signals for interviewer characteristics that, in turn, play an important role for recruiting outcomes. By merging signaling theory, insights from recruitment research, and the concept of interviewer IM, we will introduce two potential signaling paths (i.e., selling versus inducing liking) that we expect to explain how two interviewer IM behaviors (i.e., self-promotion versus ingratiation) indirectly influence different recruiting outcomes (i.e., applicant attraction versus self-perceptions) through different perceived interviewer characteristics (i.e., competence versus interest in the applicant). To do so, we first review research on differential recruitment effects of interviewer characteristics such as competence and interest in the applicant, and present signaling theory as a theoretical rationale for these effects. We then give an overview on the concept of interviewer IM as a potential starting point of the signaling process on the side of the interviewer.

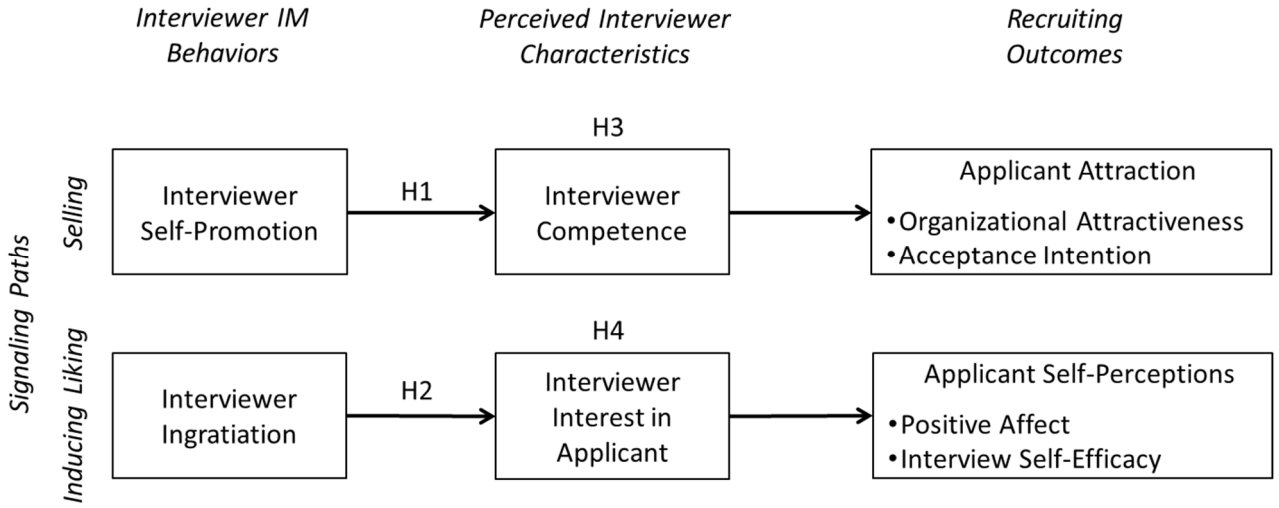

Figure 1. Proposed model of indirect associations between interviewer IM and recruiting outcomes through perceived interviewer characteristics.

Perceived Interviewer Characteristics: A Signaling Theory Perspective

While earlier recruitment research suggested that interviewers play only a minor role in influencing applicants attitudes and decisions (e.g., Powell, 1984), recent work shows that interviewers actually play an important role in attracting and retaining applicants (e.g., Carless & Imber, 2007). Signaling theory provides a suitable point of theoretical departure for explaining how and why changes in applicants' attitudes, intentions, and emotions are related to their perceptions of interviewers. According to this theory, applicants consider interviewers as salient representatives of the organization and use interviewer characteristics as an indicator of unknown aspects of the job opening and the organization (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). In turn, this information about the job and the work environment will, for example, help applicants evaluate their chances to get an offer and decide whether or not they want to work with the organization (Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013).

Past research shows that there are two interviewer characteristics that are particularly important for applicants to feel comfortable in the interview and to infer what the job and the organization would be like: perceived interviewer competence (i.e., being well prepared and proficient as an interviewer) and interest in the applicant (i.e., being favorable and appreciative towards the applicant, Dipboye et al., 2012). Research has convincingly demonstrated that perceived interviewer competence increases applicant attraction, presumably because applicants generalize perceived interviewer competence to the organization as a whole, for example, in terms of reliability and steadiness of the organization (Carless & Imber, 2007; Harris & Fink, 1987). Regarding recruiters in general (i.e., recruitment personnel including selection test takers, assessment center assessors, and interviewers), Chapman et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis showed that recruiters who are viewed as competent will increase applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness and acceptance intentions.

Furthermore, when interviewers show an interest in applicants and their past achievements, applicants should feel more comfortable and self-confident and should have stronger beliefs in their ability to accomplish interviews (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011). Meta-analytic evidence shows that recruiters' attentive and friendly interpersonal treatment is related to applicants' affective reactions such as self-efficacy (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Thus, both applicant perceptions of interviewer competence and interest in applicant have proved to be effective in enhancing recruiting outcomes.

An issue that remains unresolved regarding signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), however, is what interviewer behaviors are effective to create applicant impressions of interviewer competence and interest in the applicant. In other words, we know very little about what kinds of interviewer behaviors may influence why some interviewers are perceived as more proficient or benevolent than others (Tsai & Huang, 2014). In this regard, Hausknecht et al. (2004) pointed out that in order to determine the value of signaling theory as a theoretical explanation of recruiter influences, it first needs to be sufficiently developed and fully tested.

Interviewer Impression Management

Even though interview researchers are in agreement that it is important to learn more about the effects of interviewer IM (e.g., Bangerter et al., 2012; Dipboye & Johnson, 2013; Tsai & Huang, 2014; Wilhelmy et al., 2012, April), research on interviewer IM is extremely sparse (Dipboye & Johnson, 2013). It has been argued that interviewers can be expected to have the desire to convey a particular image because whether or not interviewers reach their recruitment goals is usually dependent on how they are perceived and evaluated by applicants (Tsai & Huang, 2014). Thus, there is a great need for more fine-grained research that considers antecedents of perceived interviewer characteristics in terms of the actual signals that interviewers use to elicit particular applicant impressions (Breaugh, 2013).

IM research has identified several different behaviors that individuals can use to create favorable impressions, but there are two that seem particularly relevant: self-promotion and ingratiation. Self-promotion has been classified as self-focused IM (i.e., focusing the conversation on the actor/sender) and refers to stressing positive qualities that one or one's organization possesses, for example mentioning past accomplishments. Ingratiation (sometimes used interchangeably with the term other-enhancement) has been classified as other-focused IM (i.e., focusing the conversation on the person who interacts with the actor/sender) and refers to flattering one's interaction partner, for example by acknowledging past accomplishments of the applicant (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992).

In a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews and observations of real selection interviews, Wilhelmy et al. (2012, April) were able to demonstrate that professional interviewers do apply self-promotion and ingratiation to elicit applicant impressions of attractiveness and closeness. In addition to these findings on the occurrence of interviewer IM in the field, there has been initial evidence for the positive effects of interviewer IM on recruiting outcomes (Tsai et al., 2009).

Despite these findings on the general positive recruitment effects of interviewer IM, we argue that different kinds of IM behaviors should have differential signaling effects resulting in different perceived interviewer characteristics. Theoretical propositions by Jones and Pittman (1982) and Gilmore, Stevens, Harrel-Cook, and Ferris (1999) suggest two main intentions of IM: While self-promotion is used to elicit perceptions of competence (i.e., selling oneself and one's organization by stressing strengths and accomplishments), ingratiation is used with the goal of inspiring liking (i.e., inducing affection by showing appreciation). Initial evidence for these differential effects of interviewer IM was found by Stevens, Mitchell, and Tripp (1990) who conducted a laboratory experiment. Results showed that interviewers' other-enhancement was effective in inducing impressions of interviewer

likableness while interviewers' opinion-conformity (i.e., showing agreement with applicants' opinions or beliefs) was effective in persuading student participants to choose a hypothetical graduate program. However, the authors pointed out that their study did not put emphasis on perceived interviewer characteristics that resulted from different interviewer IM behaviors. Thus, to advance signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), we extended these initial findings by including the actual signals sent by interviewers while considering perceived interviewer competence and interest in the applicant. Unlike most prior studies, we examined interviewer IM and its differential signaling effects in a real selection setting, and expected to find positive relationships between interviewer self-promotion and perceived interviewer competence as well as between interviewer ingratiation and perceived interviewer interest in the applicant (see also Figure 1):

> *Hypothesis 1:* Interviewer self-promotion will be positively related to perceived interviewer competence.
> *Hypothesis 2:* Interviewer ingratiation will be positively related to perceived interviewer interest in applicant.

In addition, research on the whole signaling process on the side of the interviewer merits more attention than it has received so far (Bangerter et al., 2012). Regarding self-promotion, Gilmore et al.'s (1999) framework suggests that self-promotion should increase applicant attraction indirectly through perceived interviewer competence. Furthermore, qualitative open ended survey comments that Stevens et al.'s (1990) collected in addition to their experimental data showed that even though some participants perceived self-promoting interviewer statements as a devious marketing strategy, the predominant effect of interviewer self-promotion was positive. Thus, favorable information provided by interviewers made participants believe that the interviewer had great job knowledge and that the organization itself had high performance standards. Building on this notion, we argue that interviewer self-promotion should increase applicants' perceptions of interviewer competence, which, in turn,

should improve applicants' attraction to the organization and their intention to accept a potential offer (see also the signaling path of selling in Figure 1).

> *Hypothesis 3:* Interviewer self-promotion will be positively related to perceived interviewer competence, which, in turn, will be positively related to a) applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness after the interview and b) acceptance intention after the interview.

Given that applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention after the interview may depend on their initial perceived organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention before the interview (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011), we tested this hypothesis while controlling for applicants' organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention before the interview.

With regard to interviewer ingratiation, such as giving compliments and acknowledging applicants' effort, Gilmore et al.'s (1999) framework suggests that interviewers' ingratiation behaviors signal interest in the applicant, which, in turn, should make applicants feel flattered and reassured and thus lead to positive emotions and feelings of self-confidence. Steven et al.'s (1990) qualitative data indicate that interviewer ingratiation in terms of other-enhancement was sometimes perceived as "pushy" and "buttering the ego", but also made participants feel "wanted" (p. 1087) and led to the impression that the interviewer was a nice person. Extending these findings, we assume that interviewer ingratiation has an indirect effect on applicant self-perceptions through perceived interviewer interest in the applicant (see also the signaling path of inducing liking in Figure 1):

> *Hypothesis 4:* Interviewer ingratiation will be positively related to perceived interviewer interest in applicant, which, in turn, will be positively related to a) applicants' positive affect after the interview and b) applicants' interview self-efficacy after the interview.

Given that applicants' positive affect and interview self-efficacy after the interview may depend on their initial positive affect and interview self-efficacy before the interview

(Truxillo & Bauer, 2011), we tested this hypothesis while controlling for applicants' positive affect and interview self-efficacy before the interview.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Sample. Data were collected from 110 real applicants who applied for a selective Bachelor's study program in organizational psychology at a university in Switzerland. As this study program targets people with at least one year of prior work experience, applicants were markedly older than high school graduates. Applicants' age ranged from 19 to 47 (M = 25.4, SD = 5.9), and their average work experience was 6.5 years (SD = 6.0). Of the 110 applicants, 76% were female. On average, they had participated in 5.2 interviews prior to this selection process (SD = 5.9).

The selection process for this study program was solely based on selection interviews. This enabled us to isolate the effects of interviewer IM without any confounding influences of other selection procedures. In the end, 72 of the 110 applicants received an offer by the university.

Interviews. Interviews were based on interview guides that consisted of six topical areas (see Appendix A). For each topical area there were two to five obligatory questions to be asked in the interview. However, interviewers had enough latitude to use IM behaviors because they were free in how to ask these questions and whether to add any other questions, information, and personal chit-chat. All of the 110 interviews were videotaped. On average, the interviews were 41.0 minutes long (SD = 7.1).

Interviewers. Each interview was conducted by a team of two interviewers out of a pool of 17 interviewers. These interviewer teams were randomly assembled to prevent any systematic interviewer effects such as biases in interview performance appraisals. All of the interviewers were well trained. They had participated in an interviewer training by the university for which they were conducting the interviews. Furthermore, 12 of the interviewers

had received additional interviewer trainings by other organizations or during their postgraduate training.

Eight of the interviewers were female (47%) and their age ranged from 28 to 67 years (M = 40.7, SD = 10.8). All of the interviewers had an academic degree and were actively involved in the study program (13 of them as lecturers, 3 as Bachelor thesis advisors, and 1 as an examination committee member). On average, they had been working for the university for 6 years (SD = 7.2). The interviewers were diverse regarding their interview experience, which ranged from less than a year to 27 years (M = 5.6, SD = 7.5), and had conducted an average number of 102 interviews in their lives (SD = 134.0).

Coding of Interviewer IM Behaviors

Unlike prior studies on interviewer characteristics and behaviors, we wanted to directly observe interviewer IM behaviors in a real selection setting by videotaping interviews and behaviorally coding these videotapes. Our approach to code IM behaviors was in line with previous studies that focused on the IM of applicants (McFarland, Yun, Harold, Viera, & Moore, 2005; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Five I/O psychology graduate students served as coders (one male and four females; mean age = 24.4 years, SD = 1.5 years). They had gone through a five-hour frame-of-reference (FOR) training (Bernardin & Buckley, 1981) to recognize and record the frequency of interviewer IM behaviors using the INTERACT video coding software (Mangold, 2010).

During the FOR training, coders were provided with definitions and examples of IM behaviors. Interviewer self-promotion included self-promoting statements about personal strengths and past accomplishments (e.g., “I’m not only an experienced researcher, but also a CEO at…”) as well as statements promoting the university and the study program (e.g., “We have partner universities all over the world, you know”). Interviewer ingratiation included statements flattering, encouraging, and complimenting applicants (e.g., “that’s impressive”,

"very interesting", "nice"). In addition, we also coded defensive IM[1] behaviors, which included interviewers' justifications and apologies (e.g., "sorry for making you wait").

As part of the FOR training, several video sections (overall 25 minutes) that each focused on different IM behaviors were coded independently by each coder to practice how to recognize and record each IM behavior. Based on these frequency-codings, coders received feedback. Any coding discrepancies were discussed to enhance coders' understanding of the IM behavior categories.

After the FOR training, ten 10-minute video sections representing different sections of the interview (e.g., opening sentences, interview questions, closing sentences) were frequency-coded independently by each coder to evaluate the reliability of the codings. The overall percentage of agreement was found to be good (.81 for self-promotion, .72 for ingratiation, and .71 for defensive IM). The median of the interrater agreement of different pairs of coders was reasonable ($\kappa = .66$) considering that frequencies of self-promotion and defensive IM were quite low (cf. Landis & Koch, 1977). Furthermore, the level of interrater agreement found in the present research is comparable to the ones reported in previous studies on interviewees' IM (e.g., McFarland et al., 2005; Stevens & Kristof, 1995).

Afterwards, the actual coding took place and videos of the actual 110 selection interviews were coded. We then calculated the relative frequencies of IM behaviors (i.e., IM behavior use divided by interview duration in minutes) to control for interview duration. Across the 110 interviews, the relative frequency IM scores of both interviewers were found to be significantly correlated (self-promotion: $r = .37$, $p < .05$; ingratiation: $r = .46$, $p < .05$; defensive IM: $r = .59$, $p < .05$). Thus, in order to have three single interviewer IM composites

[1] Defensive IM behaviors were coded for the sake of completeness, but were not included in data analyses. Applicants usually comply with interviewers' control in the interview so that interviewers should feel no need to justify their behaviors (Kirkwood & Ralston, 1999). In line with this assumption, defensive IM was found to hardly occur in the present study ($M = 0.01$ per minute, $SD = 0.02$). Thus, the main focus of this study was on interviewer self-promotion and ingratiation.

per videotaped applicant, the mean values of self-promotion, ingratiation, and defensive IM scores between both interviewers were calculated.

Survey Measures

Applicants were also asked to complete two surveys at two different points during the interview process. A first survey was mailed to them one to two weeks prior to the interview along with an informed consent form and a cover letter (Time 1). A second survey was handed to the applicants directly after the interview (Time 2). This design was repeated for three cohorts of applicants participating in consecutive cycles of the university's selection process, which takes place three times a year. Surveys were matched across time periods using participant identification numbers.

Unless noted otherwise, five-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* were used in this study. Table 1 presents internal consistency reliabilities for the measures for which they are relevant. All scales demonstrated adequate reliabilities. The items from the different scales used in this study are listed in Appendix B.

Perceived interviewer competence. Applicants' perceptions of interviewer competence captures to what degree interviewers were perceived as being well prepared and effective as an interviewer (Harris & Fink, 1987). To measure perceived interviewer competence at Time 2, we selected four items that were particularly appropriate from Harris and Fink (1987), one item from Carless and Imber (2007), and one item from Turban and Dougherty (1992). Internal consistency of this scale's ratings was satisfying, with a coefficient alpha of .74.

Perceived interviewer interest in applicant. Applicants' perceptions of interviewer interest in applicant captures to what degree interviewers were perceived as being favorable and benevolent towards the applicant (Harn & Thornton, 1985). To measure perceived interviewer interest in applicant at Time 2, we used two items that were particularly appropriate from Harn and Thornton (1985) and complemented these two items with one self-

generated item to increase reliability. Internal consistency of this scale's ratings was good, with a coefficient alpha of .84.

To assess the distinctiveness of our mediator measures (i.e., perceived interviewer competence and interest in applicant), we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Our proposed two-factor model with independent factors yielded good fit to the data (χ^2 [107] = 8.88, RMSEA = .00, SRMR = .04, NFI = .97, CFI = 1.00). Comparison of this model with an alternative two-factor model with covarying factors did not provide a better fit, $\Delta\chi^2$ (1, N = 107) = 0.00, $p < .05$; thus the simpler model with independent factors was favored. In addition, comparison with a single-factor model ($\Delta df = 0$) showed that the two-factor model with independent factors yielded a better fit for our data (AIC = 32.81, BIC = 64.96) than the single-factor model (AIC = 111.30, BIC = 143.38), which provided further evidence that the two mediators were distinct.

Perceived organizational attractiveness. An organization's attractiveness is reflected in individuals' affective and attitudinal thoughts about this organization as a potential place to work (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). We measured organizational attractiveness with four items from Highhouse et al.'s (2003) general attractiveness measure and adapted the items to fit the context of a university instead of a company. Furthermore, we measured all recruiting outcomes such as perceived organizational attractiveness twice: at Time 1 (i.e., before the interview) to be able to control for these baseline values, and at Time 2 (i.e., after the interview) as the actual dependent variable. The coefficient alpha for this scale's ratings was .58 for Time 1 and .75 for Time 2.

Acceptance intention. Applicants' acceptance intention captures their willingness to accept an offer for a job or a place at a university (Chapman et al., 2005). The intention to accept an offer from the organization was measured at Times 1 (used as a control variable) and 2 with a single item adapted from Powell and Goulet (1996). This measure has been widely used in previous studies (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, & Webster, 2003; Slaughter,

Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate "How likely are you to accept an offer from this university based on the information you have so far?" on an 11-point scale ranging from 0% to 100% (with an iteration of 10).

Positive affect. Applicants' positive affect reflects their positive emotional state (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). We assessed states of positive affect at Times 1 (used as a control variable) and 2 with 5 items from Thompson's (2007) short-form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent each of the items described how they felt at the moment they completed the survey using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. The coefficient alpha for this scale's ratings was .70 for Time 1 and .80 for Time 2.

Interview self-efficacy. Applicants' interview self-efficacy captures the extent of their belief in their ability to succeed with an interview (Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998). To measure applicants' self-efficacy regarding the interview at Times 1 (used as a control variable) and 2, we used three items that were particularly appropriate: two items from Horvarth, Ryan, and Stierwalt's (2000) self-efficacy measure and one item from Bauer et al.'s (1998) test-taking self-efficacy measure. We adapted the items to fit the context of an interview. The coefficient alpha for this scale's ratings was .70 for Time 1 and .64 for Time 2.

Analytical Strategy

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using correlation analyses. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested using the multiple mediation SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) in order to take potential alternative indirect paths into account. In particular, we tested whether there would be indirect effects through perceived interviewer competence over and above the influence of perceived interviewer interest in the applicant, and whether there would be indirect effects through perceived interviewer interest in the applicant over and above the influence of perceived interviewer competence. Confidence intervals for the population value of unstandardized indirect effects were computed using bias-corrected bootstrapping methods.

When applying bootstrapped confidence intervals, it is possible to avoid power problems associated with non-normal sample distributions that otherwise occur when one calculates products of coefficient tests for intervening variable effects, such as Sobel's (1986) mediation test (LeBreton, Wu, & Bing, 2009).

In addition, following recommendations by Roth and MacKinnon (2012), we adjusted our multiple mediation analyses for baseline values; that is, pre-interview scores of the applicant attraction and applicant self-perceptions were used as covariates. Controlling for a prior level of the dependent variable offers the advantage of linking independent and mediating variable more closely to temporal changes in the dependent variable. This is particularly valuable when examining hypotheses on longitudinal indirect effects, which are at the center of our study (Roth & MacKinnon, 2012).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among the variables used in this study. Interviewers applied ingratiation (M = 0.32 per minute, SD = 0.32) more often than self-promotion (M = 0.18 per minute, SD = 0.09). The mean of applicants' pre-interview organizational attractiveness perceptions was 4.78, suggesting that applicants were generally interested in getting a place at this university. Furthermore, in line with prior research (e.g., Carless & Imber, 2007; Chapman et al., 2005; Hausknecht et al., 2004), perceived interviewer competence and applicant attraction outcomes as well as perceived interviewer interest in the applicant and applicant self-perception outcomes were found to be significantly correlated.

Test of Hypotheses

As can be seen in Table 1, interviewer self-promotion and perceived interviewer competence were found to be positively correlated, r = .19, p < .05, supporting Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, interviewer ingratiation and perceived interviewer interest in the applicant were

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Alpha Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Control variables (Time 1)															
1. Organizational attractiveness	4.78	0.32	(.58)												
2. Acceptance intention	10.54	0.97	.49**	(-)											
3. Positive affect	3.93	0.59	.17	.07	(.70)										
4. Interview self-efficacy	3.94	0.64	.16	.13	.20*	(.70)									
Interviewer IM (Video Codings)															
5. Interviewer self-promotion	0.18	0.09	.08	.04	-.00	.13	(-)								
6. Interviewer ingratiation	0.40	0.32	.08	.08	.07	.23*	.37**	(-)							
7. Interviewer defensive IM[a]	0.01	0.02	.12	-.06	.04	.12	.20*	.55**	(-)						
Interviewer characteristics (Time 2)															
8. Perceived interviewer competence	4.55	0.50	.23*	.10	.12	.14	.19*	.11	.05	(.74)					
9. Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	1.75	0.83	.15	.12	.13	-.05	.05	.29**	-.09	.02	(.84)				
Recruiting outcomes (Time 2)															
10. Organizational attractiveness	4.74	0.43	.55**	.53**	.21*	.19	.16	.15	.02	.38**	.12	(.75)			
11. Acceptance intention	10.31	1.43	.45**	.76**	.11	.08	.05	-.02	-.02	.21*	.08	.66**	(-)		
Affective reactions (Time 2)															
12. Positive affect	3.65	0.82	.15	.10	.28**	.13	.08	.15	-.12	.20*	.23*	.19*	.08	(.80)	
13. Interview self-efficacy	3.40	0.72	.19*	.23*	.12	.50**	.08	.16	.02	.18	.19*	.20*	.18	.40**	(.64)

Note. Because of missing data, *N* for correlations ranges from 109 to 110. Reliability estimates appear in parentheses on the diagonal. Acceptance intention was measured on a 1–11 scale. All other variables were measured on a 1–5 scale. The interviewer IM variables indicate the number of times per minute that the IM behavior occurred. [a]Defensive IM behaviors were coded for the sake of completeness, but were not included in data analyses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Indirect Effects of Interviewer Self-Promotion on Applicant Attraction Through Perceived Interviewer Competence and Interest in Applicant

	Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Organizational attractiveness				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.22*	0.13	0.03	0.57
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.00	0.04	-0.04	0.17
Total	0.22*	0.13	0.04	0.59
Acceptance intention				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.39*	0.31	0.01	1.36
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	-0.01	0.11	-0.39	0.12
Total	0.38	0.33	-0.07	1.35
Positive affect				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.16	0.27	-0.08	1.07
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.11	0.20	-0.17	0.66
Total	0.27	0.32	-0.15	1.15
Interview self-efficacy				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.27	0.16	-0.05	0.62
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.10	0.19	-0.19	0.62
Total	0.37	0.23	-0.16	0.77

Note: Because of missing data, *N* ranges from 109 to 110; BC = bias corrected; 10,000 bootstrap samples; controlling for pre-interview baseline values.

*$p < .05$.

Table 3. Indirect Effects of Interviewer Ingratiation on Applicant Self-Perceptions Through Perceived Interviewer Competence and Interest in Applicant

	Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Organizational attractiveness				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.04	0.05	-0.02	0.14
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.07
Total	0.05	0.04	-0.04	0.16
Acceptance intention				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.10	0.09	-0.01	0.37
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.02	0.08	-0.13	0.20
Total	0.11	0.13	-0.10	0.44
Positive affect				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.17
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.12*	0.08	0.01	0.36
Total	0.15*	0.09	0.04	0.42
Interview self-efficacy				
Perceived interviewer competence	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.11
Perceived interviewer interest in applicant	0.16*	0.08	0.05	0.36
Total	0.17*	0.08	0.05	0.39

Note: *N* = 110; BC = bias corrected; 10,000 bootstrap samples; controlling for pre-interview baseline values.

*$p < .05$.

found to be positively correlated, $r = .29$, $p < .01$, supporting Hypothesis 2. Additionally, neither the correlation between interviewer self-promotion and perceived interviewer interesin the applicant ($r = .05$, $p > .05$) nor the correlation between interviewer ingratiation and perceived interviewer competence ($r = .11$, $p > .05$) was found to be significant.

According to Hypothesis 3, interviewer self-promotion would be positively related to perceived interviewer competence, which, in turn, would be positively related to applicant attraction in terms of organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention (see also Figure 1). In line with this prediction, multiple mediation analyses indicated that interviewer self-promotion indirectly influenced organizational attractiveness and acceptance intention through its effect on perceived interviewer competence, as zero was not contained in the confidence intervals for these indirect effects (see Table 2). Interviewers who used more self-promoting statements were perceived as being more competent, and applicants who perceived interviewers as more competent were more attracted to the organization (a[2] = .96, b[3] = .22) and expressed a stronger intention to accept a potential offer ($a = 1.05$, $b = .37$). Hence, Hypothesis 3 was supported. In addition, there was no evidence that interviewer self-promotion influenced applicant attraction independent of its effect on perceived interviewer competence (c'[4] = -.08, $p = .93$ for organizational attractiveness and $c' = .31$, $p = .40$ for acceptance intention). Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 2, perceived interviewer interest in the applicant was found to not contribute to these indirect associations.

According to Hypothesis 4, interviewer ingratiation would be positively related to perceived interviewer interest in the applicant, which, in turn, would be positively related to applicant self-perceptions in terms of positive affect and interview self-efficacy. In line with this prediction, multiple mediation analyses indicated that interviewer ingratiation indirectly

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[2] Path a represents the effect of the independent variable on the proposed mediator (cf. Preacher & Hayes, 2008).
[3] Path b represents the effect of the proposed mediator on the dependent variable, partialling out the effect of the independent variable (cf. Preacher & Hayes, 2008).
[4] Path c' represents the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (cf. Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

influenced applicants' positive affect and interview self-efficacy through its effect on perceived interviewer interest in the applicant, as zero was not contained in the confidence intervals for these indirect effects (see Table 3). Interviewers who used more ingratiation statements were perceived as being more interested in applicants, and applicants who perceived interviewers as being more interested had a more positive affect (a = .74, b = .17) and expressed a stronger belief in their ability to succeed in interviews (a = .83, b = .19). Hence, Hypothesis 4 was supported. In addition, there was no evidence that interviewer ingratiation influenced applicant self-perceptions independent of its effect on perceived interviewer interest in applicant (c' = .17, p = .48 for positive affect and c' = -.07, p = .72 for interview self-efficacy). Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 2, perceived interviewer competence was found to not contribute to these indirect associations.

In addition to these multiple mediation analyses, we conducted simple mediation analyses (i.e., considering only one mediator at a time), and the pattern of the results stayed the same. Furthermore, we conducted analyses to test whether our results were influenced by confounding variables. Multiple mediation analyses were repeated controlling for applicants' age, sex, and interview experience, but the pattern of the results did not change.

Discussion

Evidence from a growing number of studies suggests that the way interviewers are perceived by applicants can have tremendous effects on recruiting outcomes, but the signals leading to these perceived interviewer characteristics are still unknown (Breaugh, 2013). Our study examined which interviewer IM behaviors might serve as effective signals to create favorable applicant impressions of interviewer characteristics, which, in turn, influence recruiting outcomes. We provide a conceptual model (Figure 1) that captures the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers and delineates two paths through which two forms of interviewer IM behaviors (i.e., self-promotion and ingratiation) serve as signals for applicants.

The pattern of our results yielded two key findings. First, we found that interviewer IM behaviors serve as effective signals for interviewer characteristics. Interviewers who apply self-promotion are perceived as more competent while interviewers who apply ingratiation are perceived as more interested in the applicant. Second, our results provide support for the two differential signaling paths suggested by our model. In line with the proposed signaling path of selling, interviewer self-promotion indirectly increased applicant attraction to the organization through perceptions of interviewer competence. Furthermore, in line with the proposed signaling path of inducing liking, interviewer ingratiation indirectly increased applicants' positive self-perceptions through perceptions of interviewers' interest in applicant. To our knowledge, these results offer the first evidence that interviewer IM behaviors can and do serve as signals for applicants, shape their perceptions of the interviewer, and influence their attitudes, emotions, and intentions towards the company.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Our study supports and advances signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) by integrating the concept of interviewer IM as the first step of interviewers' signaling efforts. Specifically, we developed and tested a conceptual model to explain how and why interviewer IM behaviors serve as signals that influence perceived interviewer characteristics and, indirectly, recruiting outcomes. Our findings stress that the signaling process that is initiated by interviewers does not solely start with applicants' perceptions of interviewer characteristics, but with the actual behaviors interviewers show. In fact, we found that there are two consecutive signaling processes taking place: Interviewer IM behaviors serve as signals for interviewer characteristics, which, in turn, serve as signals for organizational characteristics and feedback that reassures applicants.

Furthermore, past IM research has rarely differentiated between different mechanisms of IM and thus largely ignored potential differential signaling effects. Thus, we contribute to the literature by expanding previous theoretical frameworks on IM (Gilmore et al., 1999;

Jones & Pittman, 1982) and showing that different interviewer IM behaviors are used with diverse intentions, such as selling oneself and one's organization and inducing liking in the applicant. Because of these diverse interviewer intentions, different process mechanisms are triggered so that very different consequences may follow. Consequently, for researchers it is crucial to consider various recruiting outcomes, including those that reflect organizations' perspective such as attractiveness as an employer and applicants' willingness to accept a job offer, but also criteria that reflect applicants' perspective such as positive affect and their belief in the ability to succeed with an interview. In other words, researchers should take the applicants' perspective and examine how interviews can be conducted in a way that makes it a worthwhile experience for applicants and, partly based on that, a successful recruitment effort for organizations.

Our findings do not only benefit the research community but also have significant implications for practitioners. Our finding that interviewer self-promotion and ingratiation can be effective recruitment techniques highlights potential benefits of leveraging recruiting outcomes through interviewer IM. For instance, organizations could conduct training sessions to enhance interviewers' IM skills. Specifically, self-enhancement could help interviewers to highlight strengths of themselves, the job, and the organization and attract the best applicants. Ingratiation, in contrast, could help interviewers to make applicants feel wanted and thus foster positive emotions and feelings of self-confidence.

Despite these potential benefits, interviewer IM may lead to conflicts between the selection and recruitment needs of employers. Interviewer IM may enhance the recruitment function of the interview but may adversely affect the psychometric qualities such as inter-rater reliability (because of deviations from standardization) and criterion-related validity (because of the introduction of systematic error) and thus impede the selection function. However, as Tsai and Huang (2014) recently pointed out, this does not mean that employers have to sacrifice their recruitment needs for their selection needs. For example, in order to

achieve a balance between the recruitment and selection functions, interviewers may consider splitting the purposes and conducting two separate interviews, "one designed strictly for prediction and the other designed to allow an informal question-and-answer session to meet the needs of applicants" (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998, p. 839). However, as separate interviews involve additional costs, another solution might be to conduct highly structured interviews but incorporate a more personal interview stage, for example at the beginning and the end of the interview (Chapman & Rowe, 2001; Schuler & Funke, 1989).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Although results of the present study provide valuable insights into differential signaling effects of interviewer IM, the study is not without limitations. For example, our data are based on real selection interviews that were conducted as part of the selection process for one specific academic organization. This may call the generalizability of our study into question, but it does not diminish the relevance of this sample because the challenges that universities face regarding their recruitment efforts are similar to those in private enterprises in terms of competition with other universities and the need to balance selection and recruitment aims (e.g., Colarelli, Monnot, Ronan, & Roscoe, 2012). Furthermore, it is important to note that even though we examined applicants who applied for a Bachelor's study program, our sample does not represent a student sample. In fact, in our study, applicants had work experience and were markedly older than high school graduates with an average age of 25 years. The reason for this is that the study program is specifically designed for individuals with prior work experience who want to complement their training and education with an additional Bachelor's degree.

Another potential limitation of this study is that only small changes in applicants' attitudes, intentions, and emotions can be expected in the course of the interview process because of constrained variability and range restrictions (Breaugh, 2013). For instance, confirmation bias (Casad, 2007) contributes to the phenomenon that once an initial attitude is

formed, this attitude is often hard to change. On that note, applicants have the tendency to favor information that affirms their initial impressions of the organization, the interviewer and the selection process, which results in low variability of their attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Macan & Dipboye, 1990; Powell, 1991). Furthermore, applicants who decide to submit an application and to pursue the selection process usually have high baseline values of recruiting outcomes (e.g., high attraction to the organization and high interview self-efficacy), which may lead to range restrictions. However, these methodological challenges are not unique for our study but are a common issue in recruitment research. Furthermore, low variability and range restrictions tend to make hypotheses testing more conservative, which further stresses the significance of this study's findings.

Another issue is that some researchers and practitioners may argue against the use of interviewer IM because interviewers might exaggerate information and try to deceive applicants when applying IM behaviors. As a consequence, interviewer IM might have positive recruitment effects in the short run but detrimental recruitment effects in the long run. For instance, unrealistic expectations can ultimately result in negative affective reactions on the part of employees (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). Thus, interviewers should avoid pursuing the wrong applicants on the wrong terms.

A practical solution may be to combine IM with realistic job previews (RJPs, Wanous, 1976) in terms of presenting positive attributes while also informing applicants about possible downsides of the job and the organization. Thus, a practically important question for future research is how IM and RJPs can be effectively combined. Furthermore, interviewers should consider using authentic instead of deceptive IM, that is, IM that is based on true facts that are presented in a favorable way (Tsai & Huang, 2014). In this regard, researchers should examine whether negative long-term effects of interviewer IM can indeed be avoided by using authentic IM.

Furthermore, the results of the present study suggest that signaling effects of interviewer IM are independent of interviewers' background variables such as interviewers' age, sex, and interview experience. In addition, the present study examined the phenomenon of interviewer IM within one organization, thus interview structure and the relation of selection and recruitment goals was held constant. However, interview structure and the ratio of recruitment versus selection aims may be important boundary conditions of interviewer IM and should therefore be studied. Specifically, researchers should focus on the possibility that there might be a minimum level of freedom regarding the interview content and a minimum level of recruitment objectives needed for interviewer IM to occur and to be effectively applied. Overall, our results suggest that interviewer IM behaviors can serve as effective recruitment tools, and we hope that future research on the topics and questions that we have mentioned will illuminate when, how, and why interviewer IM is associated with perceptions of favorable interviewer characteristics and positive outcomes of the interview process for both applicants and organizations.

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Appendix A

Sample questions from the interview guide sorted by topical areas

1. Interest in psychology

   How would you explain what psychology actually is to someone who is not familiar with psychology?

2. Realistic expectations regarding content and later occupation

   How do you envision your future professional occupation?

3. Commitment

   Was there a period in your life in which you were especially burdened (in the sense of having a lot to do or having to deal with many things at the same time)? How did you deal with this?

4. Professional attitude

   How do you define yourself (your role) as a psychologist in problem solving?

5. Social skills

   How would others (e.g., good friends, peers, colleagues) describe you? Is there a difference between your own description and that of others? If so, how do you explain this?

6. Interest in interdisciplinary collaboration

   Can you think of specific fields of work where an interdisciplinary team would be ideal?

Appendix B

Survey Items (and References from Which each Items stems in Parentheses)

Perceived interviewer competence (T2)

1. These persons were effective as interviewers. (Harris & Fink, 1987)
2. The interviewers were well acquainted with the study program. (Harris & Fink, 1987)
3. The interviewers were capable of answering questions. (Carless & Imber, 2007)
4. The interviewers were well prepared for the interview. (Turban & Dougherty, 1992)

Perceived interviewer interest in applicant (T2)

1. The interviewers complimented me. (Harn & Thornton, 1985)
2. The interviewers indicated that I was a prime candidate for this study program. (Harn & Thornton, 1985)
3. The interviewers praised me. (Self-generated)

Organizational attractiveness (T1 and T2, Highhouse et al., 2003)

1. This university would be a good place for me to study.
2. This university is attractive to me as a place to study.
3. Studying at this university is very appealing to me.
4. I would not be interested in this university except as a last resort. (reversed-worded item)

Acceptance intention (T1 and T2, Powell & Goulet, 1996)

1. How likely are you to accept an offer from this university based on the information you have so far?

Positive affect (T1 and T2, Watson et al., 1988)

1. Active
2. Inspired
3. Alert
4. Determined
5. Attentive

Interview self-efficacy (T1 and T2)

1. I believe I can perform well in interviews. (Horvath et al., 2000)
2. I am not good at performing well at interviews like this. (Horvath et al., 2000)
3. I am confident in my abilities regarding interviews. (Bauer et al., 1998)

Chapter 3

How Do Interview Structure and Rapport Building Influence Organizational Attractiveness and Recommendation Intentions? A Signaling Perspective

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Abstract

Interview structure and rapport building are major components of employment interviews that might influence recruiting outcomes such as organizational attractiveness and applicants' intentions to recommend the organization to others looking for a job. Although considerable evidence suggests that rapport building plays a key role in attracting applicants, less is known about the role of interview structure and about the underlying mechanisms that explain the recruitment effects of both rapport building and interview structure. Drawing from signaling theory and trust belief frameworks, we assume that interview structure enhances recruiting outcomes in terms of organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions by signaling organizational competence, and at the same time, interview structure might decrease these outcomes by signaling a lack of organizational benevolence. We further argue that rapport building enhances recruiting outcomes by inducing applicants' trust in organizations' competence and benevolence. A longitudinal three-wave field study with 176 applicants showed that the effects of both rapport building and interview structure perceptions on recruiting outcomes were positive and were mainly mediated by organizational competence (instead of benevolence) perceptions. These findings contribute to a nuanced theoretical understanding of how applicants perceive and interpret the interview process with respect to recruiting outcomes. In addition, our findings challenge the assumption that interview structure might deter applicants from joining the organization.

Although the psychometric properties of employment interviews have been a longstanding pivotal research topic in the context of personnel selection, there is increased recognition that attention should be given to interviews' recruitment function. Indeed, the interview constitutes not only a sequence of questions but also a dialogue between an organizational representative and an applicant Along these lines, two major interview components have been shown to play an important role in how applicants experience the interview situation, namely interview structure and rapport building (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012).

Currently, the effects of interview structure and rapport building on recruiting outcomes are not well understood, especially with regard to our theoretical knowledge about the underlying processes on the side of the applicant (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Connerley, 2014). For example, Breaugh (2013) pointed out that "more attention needs to be given to applicant perceptions of specific recruitment actions … given that they likely mediate the relationships between an organization's recruitment actions and outcomes" (p. 391). In addition, although rapport building seems to play a key role in attracting applicants, interview structure has been found to have mixed effects on similar recruiting outcomes (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014). For instance, some studies found no effects of structure (in terms of perceived consistency of the recruitment process) on acceptance intentions and perceived procedural justice (e.g., Chapman & Zweig, 2005), others found positive effects on acceptance intentions, perceived procedural justice, and organizational attractiveness (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004), and still others found negative effects of high degrees of interview structure on acceptance intentions and organizational attractiveness (e.g., Conway & Peneno, 1999; Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013; Kohn & Dipboye, 1998). Understandably, repeated calls have been made to provide explanations for these inconsistent findings and propose

underlying mechanisms that might link interview structure, rapport building, and recruiting outcomes (e.g., Breaugh, 2013; Campion et al., 1997; Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

To shed light on these inconsistent findings, the present study applies signaling and trust belief frameworks to recruitment research. On the basis of these frameworks, our premise is that a main thrust of applicants consists of figuring out what it would be like to be part of the organization (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). We argue that apart from the factual information provided by interviewers, applicants use pivotal interview components (structure and rapport building) as signals for how the organization would treat them when they were to work there. Specifically, applicants use their perceptions of interview components for ascribing symbolic organizational attributes in terms of personality traits to the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004). We further posit that these symbolic organizational attributes will mediate the effects of rapport building and interview structure on recruiting outcomes over and above applicants' initial attitudes and intentions towards the organization.

This study focuses on two recruiting outcomes that are relevant to organizations, namely organizational attractiveness in terms of attitudes about the organization as a potential place for employment and applicants' intentions to recommend the organization to others. Organizational attractiveness has been found to predict various other outcomes that are important to organizations, such as job choice intention/behavior, and is therefore considered a central recruiting outcome (Chapman et al., 2005). Applicants' recommendation intentions are central because distributing employment information through word-of-mouth has been shown to influence potential future applicants' attraction to the organization and decisions to apply (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009).

We test our model using a three-wave longitudinal study design in a higher education recruitment context. The educational domain is relevant for studying recruitment issues because many universities and colleges are facing similar challenges as companies (Sackett,

Schmitt, Ellingson, & Kabin, 2001). For example, competition for students is often high among universities (e.g., Colarelli, Monnot, Ronan, & Roscoe, 2012). That said, a difference between the educational domain and companies is that higher education admission decisions are often based on Grade Point Average or standardized educational tests such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT, Sackett et al., 2001) instead of on selection interview ratings. However, in the specific context of our study, admission decisions were reached based on selection interviews with individuals who had prior work experience, which provides further similarity to selection practices in companies.

Structure and Rapport Building in Employment Interviews

Past research indicates that a key factor in enhancing applicant attraction is how employment interviews are conducted (Chapman et al., 2005). Thus, the interview process itself provides a leverage point for employers, as interviews can be designed to vary in terms of structure and rapport building (Dipboye et al., 2012).

Various approaches have been suggested to increase the degree of *structure* in selection interviews (cf. Campion et al., 1997; Chapman & Zweig, 2005), so the term "structure" has various facets (Macan, 2009). Keeping the interview content consistent across applicants has been considered the most basic way of enhancing interview structure (Campion et al., 1997). Therefore, in the present study, we focus primarily on structure in terms of interview *consistency*, which can be defined as reducing procedural variations in how interviews are conducted (see Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994).

Previous theorizing and research on recruitment effects of interview consistency have yielded mixed findings regarding similar outcome variables. For example, some researchers made the proposition that higher consistency might appear more impersonal, make applicants feel less comfortable, and lead to a decrease in applicants' opportunity to present themselves, which might decrease applicants' affective reactions and attitudes towards the company (Campion et al., 1997; Latham & Finnegan, 1993). In line with this assumption, Conway and

Peneno (1999) found that applicants showed more negative affect in reaction to structured than to general interview questions. Similarly, Farago et al. (2013) discovered a negative main effect of the degree of structure on applicants' acceptance intentions. Furthermore, in another experimental study, interview structure had negative effects on organizational attractiveness (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998).

However, it has also been pointed out that applicants may view consistency as face valid, professional, and fair (Boswell, Roehling, LePine, & Moynihan, 2003; Campion et al., 1997; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, & Pearlman, 1993). For instance, meta-analytic results regarding recruitment processes in general (i.e., not only specific for interviews) revealed positive effects of consistency on applicant self-efficacy, organizational attractiveness, acceptance intentions, and perceived procedural justice (Chapman et al., 2005; Hausknecht et al., 2004). In contrast, other studies found that indicators for recruiting outcomes like applicants' acceptance intentions and perceived procedural justice were not affected by interview structure such as consistency (e.g., Chapman & Zweig, 2005).

Apart from interview structure (consistency), *rapport building* constitutes another interview component that has been widely discussed. In the course of the whole interview, establishing rapport is likely to occur through friendly conversation in which interviewers try to put the applicant at ease, such as speaking in a gentle tone or acting in a friendly fashion while asking questions (Collins, Lincoln, & Frank, 2002; Stevens, 1998). Past research findings stress the role of rapport building for forming initial impressions (Barrick et al., 2012; Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010) and confirm positive recruitment effects of rapport building (Chapman et al., 2005; Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Derous, 2007; Derous, Born, & De Witte, 2004).

Important outstanding questions deal with the underlying mechanisms of the effects of interview consistency and rapport building on recruiting outcomes, namely why and how interview consistency and rapport building contribute to recruiting outcomes. Figure 1 depicts

our conceptual model of applicants' reactions to interview consistency and rapport building. This model draws from signaling theory to conceptualize mechanisms that may explain relationships between applicants' perceptions of consistency and rapport building during the interview and recruiting outcomes after the interview (i.e., organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions).

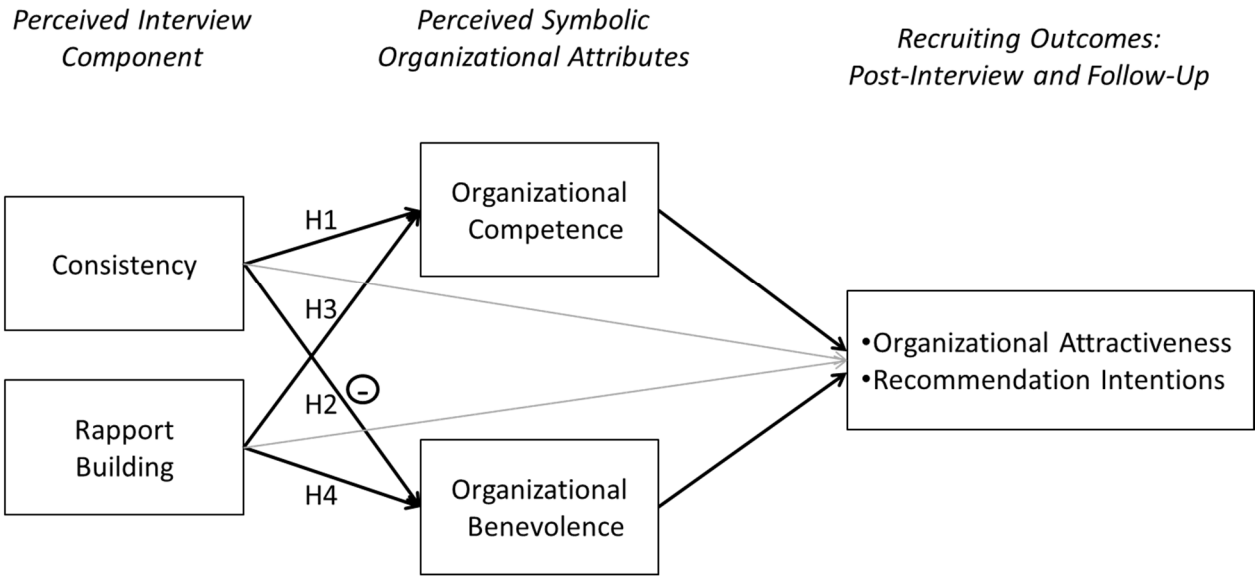

Figure 1. Proposed relationships between consistency perceptions, rapport building perceptions, and recruiting outcomes, as mediated by symbolic organizational attributes such as organizational competence perceptions and organizational benevolence perceptions.

Potential Mediation Mechanisms

Signaling Theory

Signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) is a general framework on how two parties with partly conflicting interests exchange information. It has served as a theoretical foundation for research in various literatures such as strategic management (e.g., Zhang & Wiersema, 2009), marketing (e.g., Connelly, Ketchen, & Slater, 2011), and recruitment (e.g., Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014). For example, applied to interviews, signaling theory suggests that the way interviews are conducted provides important information to applicants and is interpreted as signaling whether the organization as a whole

is a good place to work (Celani & Singh, 2011). However, a conceptual drawback in past research has been that the underlying mechanisms and the content of signals have either been assumed or remained unspecific. For example, Jones et al. (2014) emphasize that "the mechanisms that link signals to outcomes – inferences that people draw from signals – are rarely tested, or even specified conceptually" (p. 385).

In going beyond signaling theory as a general explanatory framework and in fact elucidating the content and processes associated with the signals emitted, we consider organizational symbolic attributes to be a particularly promising concept. Past research has shown that organizations' image as an employer can be understood as personality traits that are ascribed to the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter et al., 2004). In particular, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) introduced the instrumental-symbolic framework literature and posited that applicants' image perceptions of organizations are partly a function of two types of information, namely instrumental attributes and symbolic meanings. While instrumental attributes refer to factual information such as pay or tuition fees, working hours, and training programs, symbolic meanings refer to less tangible characteristics such as personality traits that applicants infer from organizational information and that lead to perceptions of the organization, for example, as trendy, prestigious, or innovative (Slaughter et al., 2004). Regarding recruiting outcomes, symbolic meanings such as symbolic organizational attributes are especially important because they have been found to incrementally predict organizational attractiveness above and beyond instrumental attributes (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

Signaling Effects of Consistency

On the basis of signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), we argue that consistency perceptions may serve as positive signals for applicants for evaluating the organization as a potential employer. Specifically, when applicants perceive the interview process to be consistent and standardized across applicants, they may infer that the

organization is well-organized, secure, and reliable and ascribe such traits to the organization. In other words, the signal of interview consistency might invoke a signal-based mechanism among applicants that the company treats its employees in a systematic, fair and reliable way. Generally, the umbrella term "organizational competence" perceptions (also referred to as "competence" perceptions in the recruitment literature) has been used to capture trait inferences such as well-organized, secure, and dependable (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter et al., 2004). Hence, we expect that interview consistency might signal organizational competence which might, in turn, lead to positive short-term and long-term recruitment effects (also see Figure 1).

However, there are also theoretical arguments for interview consistency sending less positive signals, and therefore having negative recruitment effects. When applicants perceive the interview process to be consistent and standardized across applicants, they may infer that the organization can be described as being unsupportive, indifferent, and cold. Specifically, when the interview is conducted in a uniform way, applicants may conclude that employees are also not treated with much individual attention. Generally, the umbrella term "organizational benevolence" perceptions (also referred to as "boy scout" perceptions in the recruitment literature) has been used to capture trait inferences such as supportive, likable, and understanding (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter et al., 2004). Hence, we expect that interview consistency might signal a lack of organizational benevolence which might, in turn, lead to negative short-term and long-term recruitment effects (also see Figure 1). Note that apart from these conceptual arguments, there is also some empirical evidence that structured interviews might emit such signals, although their mediating role was not examined. Some researchers have stated that interview structure may signal rigidity and a lack of warmth and support (Boswell et al., 2003; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Kohn & Dipboye, 1998) and applicants have been found to show less favorable affective reactions to structured interview questions (Conway & Peneno, 1999) as well as less intent to accept a potential job

offer (Farago et al., 2013). In sum, this leads to the following two hypotheses (see also Figure 1):

> *Hypothesis 1:* Organizational competence perceptions will mediate positive effects of consistency perceptions on organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions.
>
> *Hypothesis 2:* Organizational benevolence perceptions will mediate negative effects of consistency perceptions on organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions.

Signaling Effects of Rapport Building

Establishing rapport with applicants has consistently been found to have positive effects on applicants' attitudes and intentions towards the company, but it remains unclear how exactly rapport building leads to these positive reactions (Dipboye et al., 2012). Again, we posit that this interview component sends a signal in terms of instilling trust in applicants in how they will be treated by the organization if they were to join it. We understand trust as a compilation of expectations and judgments by a trustor in terms of the applicant on different characteristics of the trustee in terms of the organization (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998).

Specifically, there might be two accompanying signal-based mechanism of instilling trust in applicants. First, rapport building during the interview might invoke trust among applicants that the organization is capable of fulfilling its obligations in terms of being competent. Second, when applicants perceive empathy and consideration as being part of the interview process, these perceptions might invoke trust that the organization acts in the best interest of its employees in terms of being benevolent. Along these lines, Klotz et al. (2013) also posited that trusting interactions between applicants and organizational representatives likely increase applicants' perceptions of the organization's benevolence and competence. Hence, we expect that rapport building might signal both organizational competence and organizational benevolence which, in turn, might both lead to positive short-term and long-

term recruitment effects (also see Figure 1). Note that in addition to these conceptual arguments, there is some initial empirical evidence that rapport building might produce such signals, even though mediating mechanisms were not examined. Some scholars have stated that rapport building may signal warmth, support, and dependability (e.g., Campion et al., 1997), and applicants have been found to favor interviews that incorporate rapport building (Chapman et al., 2005; Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Derous, 2007; Derous et al., 2004). In sum, this leads to the following two hypotheses (see also Figure 1):

> *Hypothesis 3:* Organizational competence perceptions will mediate positive effects of rapport building perceptions on organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions.

> *Hypothesis 4:* Organizational benevolence perceptions will mediate positive effects of rapport building perceptions on organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions.

Method

Participants and Procedures

We tested our hypotheses in a field sample of individuals who were interviewed for a selective Bachelor's program in organizational psychology at a university in Switzerland. There were several reasons why this sample was appropriate for our study. First, the selection process for this study program was based solely on selection interviews. This enabled isolating the effects of interview process characteristics without any confounding influences of other selection procedures. Second, the study program targeted individuals with at least one year of work experience. Thus, importantly, our study was not based on a student sample, but on applicants with prior work experience. Third, the selection interviews in this setting were moderately structured and thus in line with recommendations by recent research (Levashina et al., 2014; Macan, 2009). Interview questions were based on interview guides, consisting of six topical areas (see Appendix A). For each topical area there were two to five obligatory

questions to be asked in the interview. However, interviewers were free in how to ask these questions and whether to add any other questions, information, and personal chit-chat. This level of question standardization represents Level 3 of Huffcutt and Arthur's (1994) interview question standardization classification scheme that ranges from no constraints (Level 1) to complete standardization (Level 4). Furthermore, the overall level of rapport building in our study corresponds to the lowest level of Levashina et al.'s (2014) four-level classification scheme, ranging from no guidance on rapport-building (lowest level) to prohibition of rapport building (highest level). Therefore, in this sample, it seemed likely that we could find adequate variance in applicants' perceptions of both interview consistency and rapport building. Fourth, all interviews were conducted by a panel of two interviewers (see below). This ensured that the effects found could not be ascribed to one interviewer's personality and/or interviewing style. Instead, they reflect applicants' perceptions of how the interview components were applied in the interviews.

On average, the interviews were 39.09 minutes long (SD = 6.87). Interviews were conducted as panel interviews in teams of 2 out of a pool of 17 interviewers. The interviewer teams were randomly assembled to prevent any systematic effects. All of the interviewers were well trained. They had participated in interview training by the university for which they were conducting the interviews. Furthermore, 12 of the interviewers had received additional interview training by other organizations or during their postgraduate training.

Following suggestions in the literature (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011), we used a longitudinal study design to examine the long-term effects on recruiting outcomes, and control for baseline values. Data collection consisted of three surveys filled out at three different points during the interview process: prior to the interview (Time 1), directly after the interview (Time 2), and after applicants knew whether they had received an offer or not (Time 3). This design was repeated for three cohorts participating in consecutive 3-month

recruiting cycles of the university. Surveys were matched across time periods by using participant identification numbers.

The first survey was mailed to 177 candidates one to two weeks prior to the interview along with an informed consent form and a cover letter. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized. Furthermore, we assured the participants that the survey would be used for research purposes only, and that their responses would in no way influence the selection decisions. A total of 176 participants provided valid pre-interview responses (99% of the original 177).

The second survey was handed to the participants directly after the interview. Participants were asked to immediately complete the survey and to return it to a member of our research team waiting next door. A total of 173 participants provided valid responses (98% of the previous 176).

A third survey was mailed to the original sample of 177 participants one week after they knew whether they were admitted to the study program or not, which was two to four weeks after their interview. A total of 90 participants (51%) received an admission by the university. A reminder was sent when no response was received within two weeks. To increase the response rate, participants were offered a report on the study results, the chance to win two out of eight movie theater vouchers, and an individual written feedback report on the Big Five personality traits if they returned the third survey (a short personality scale was included in the third survey for this purpose). In addition, we publicized the importance of the study through the university's homepage. A total of 129 participants provided follow-up responses (73% of the original 177).

Of the 176 applicants who returned the first survey, 74% were female. Their age ranged from 19 to 48 (M = 24.59, SD = 5.67) and their average work experience was 5.77 years (SD = 5.42). On average, they had participated in 4.82 interviews prior to this selection process (SD = 5.05). Of the 173 participants who returned the second survey, 73%

were female, and about half (55%) received an offer by the university. Their mean age was 24.55 years (*SD* = 5.58), their mean work experience was 5.71 years (*SD* = 5.29), and their mean interview experience was 4.80 interviews (*SD* = 5.04). Of the 129 participants who returned the third survey, 75% were female, and 66% of them had received an offer by the university. Their mean age was 24.98 years (*SD* = 5.74), their mean work experience was 6.27 years (*SD* = 5.58), and their mean interview experience was 5.13 interviews (*SD* = 5.55).

Response-non-response comparison revealed no differences in age, gender, work experience, and interview experience among those who completed all three data collection surveys and those who only completed the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys, but not the Time 3 survey. However, participants who returned all three surveys significantly differed from participants who did not return the third survey regarding outcome favorability; drop-out at Time 3 was higher for applicants who were not admitted to the study program (44 %) than for those who were admitted (11 %), $\chi^2(1) = 18.70$, $p < .01$. Thus, outcome favorability was incorporated as a control variable in all data analyses that included follow-up data (see also Truxillo & Bauer, 2011).

Measures

Unless stated otherwise, five-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = s*trongly agree* were used in this study. All items used in this study are listed in Appendix B.

Organizational attractiveness. An organization's attractiveness is reflected in individuals' affective and attitudinal thoughts about this organization as a potential place to work or study (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). We measured organizational attractiveness at Times 1 (used as a control variable), 2, and 3 with four items adapted from Highhouse et al.'s (2003) general attractiveness measure. We modified the items to fit the context of a university instead of a company. Coefficient alpha of this scale's ratings ranged between .75 (post-interview) and .87 (follow-up).

Recommendation intentions. Applicants' intentions to recommend the organization to others who are potentially interested in applying for this study program was measured at Times 1 (used as a control variable), 2, and 3 using a single item that we adapted from Smither, Reilly, Millsap, and Pearlman (1993) and that has been successfully used in past research (e.g. by Bell, Wiechmann, & Ryan, 2006; Farago et al., 2013).

Interview consistency perceptions. Applicants' perceptions of interview consistency constitute a key element of interview structure (Campion et al., 1997) and refer to reducing procedural variations in how interviews are conducted (cf. Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994). To measure competence perceptions at Time 2, we selected four items from published scales that seemed particularly appropriate. We adapted an item from the question consistency measure by Chapman and Zweig (2005). In addition, we adapted three items of the consistency subscale of the Social Procedural Justice Scale (Bauer et al., 2001). Items were modified to capture the applicants' perspective, and to refer to selection interviews instead of tests. The internal consistency of this scale's ratings was satisfying, with coefficient alpha of .74.

Interview rapport building perceptions. Applicants' rapport building perceptions refer to the extent to which applicants have the impression that interviewers try to put them at ease and act in a personal and caring way (Collins et al., 2002; Stevens, 1998). To measure rapport building perceptions at Time 2, we selected items from the personableness scales of Liden and Parsons's (1986) and Harris and Fink's (1987) that seemed most appropriate. In addition, one item from the human treatment scale by Derous et al. (2004) was adapted to capture the applicants' perspective. Furthermore, we selected a fourth item from the warmth scale by Carless and Imber (2007). Coefficient alpha of this scale's ratings was .74.

Competence and benevolence perceptions. As noted, part of an organization's image as an employer can be understood in terms of personality traits that are ascribed to an organization, such as competence and benevolence (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter et al., 2004). To measure organizational competence perceptions at Time 2, participants were

asked to rate their agreement with the degree to which eight trait adjectives described the university they were applying to. For this purpose, we selected one adjective from the Competence scale by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) and one from the Competence scale by Aaker (1997) that seemed particularly appropriate. To improve the scale's psychometric properties, six adjectives from Goldberg's (1992) Conscientiousness scale were added because competence is conceptually related to conscientiousness (Aaker, 1997). Similarly, to measure organizational benevolence perceptions, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the degree to which eight trait adjectives described the university they were applying to at Time 2. For this purpose, we took five adjectives from the Boy Scout scale by Slaughter et al. (2004). In addition, three adjectives from Goldberg's (1992) Agreeableness scale were added because benevolence is conceptually related to agreeableness (Aaker, 1997).

To ensure the construct and content validity of these scales, we conducted a pre-study with subject-matter experts (see also Judge & Hurst, 2008). That is, seven individuals (four doctoral students, and three postdoctoral fellows) who had substantial expertise in organizational psychology and personality research evaluated the items. These raters had neither knowledge of the study purpose nor of the measures involved. Raters evaluated the 16 items of our competence and benevolence measures to determine "whether each item was a good indicator of competence perceptions" and "whether each item was a good indicator of benevolence perceptions." Individuals used five-point Likert-type response scales (1 = *definitely not* to 5 = *definitely*). As false alarms, 10 items of the excitement scale and 6 items of the sophistication scale from the brand personality measure by Aaker (1997) were also included. These 32 items were randomly ordered.

The average competence rating for the 8 purported competence items was $M = 4.64$ ($SD = 0.36$), the average competence rating for the 8 purported benevolence items was $M = 2.55$ ($SD = 0.55$), for the excitement items it was $M = 2.44$ ($SD = 0.59$), and for the sophistication items it was $M = 2.00$ ($SD = 0.35$). The average benevolence rating for the 8

purported competence items was $M = 2.54$ ($SD = 0.53$), the average benevolence rating for the 8 purported benevolence items was $M = 4.54$ ($SD = 0.39$), for the excitement items it was $M = 2.36$ ($SD = 0.61$), and for the sophistication items it was $M = 2.45$ ($SD = 0.64$). Across the seven raters, interrater reliability was $ICC_{2,2} = 0.902$, F (63, 378) = 11.276, $p < .001$, suggesting good reliability of the judgments made (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Furthermore, the differences in competence ratings between the purported competence items and the purported benevolence items as well as the excitement and sophistication items were all significant ($p < .01$). Similarly, the differences in benevolence ratings between the purported benevolence items and the purported competence items as well as the excitement and sophistication items were all significant ($p < .01$). Thus, the 8 purported competence items are adequate indicators of the competence construct and the 8 purported benevolence items are equally adequate indicators of the benevolence construct. Furthermore, in the main study, the internal consistencies of the competence scale's ratings and the benevolence scale's ratings were satisfactory, with coefficient alphas of .88 and .89, respectively.

Outcome favorability. Outcome favorability refers to whether applicants make it to the next step in the selection process, such as getting an offer from the organization. This construct has been found to be a pivotal factor in applicants' perceptions, intentions, and behaviors after feedback (e.g., Hausknecht et al., 2004). Thus, consistent with Truxillo and Bauer (2011), we asked the university to provide us with information on whether applicants were admitted to the study program as an indicator of their outcome favorability. We used this indicator as a control variable in follow-up data analyses.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables of this study. The mean of applicants' pre-interview organizational attractiveness perceptions was 4.76, suggesting that applicants were generally interested in getting admitted to this

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Alpha Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Control variables													
1. Outcome favorability – Time 3	0.54	0.50	(-)										
2. Organizational attractiveness – Time 1	4.76	0.38	-.08	(.72)									
3. Recommendation intentions – Time 1	4.34	0.75	-.13	.28**	(-)								
Perceived interview characteristics													
4. Consistency perceptions	4.25	0.63	.01	.04	.08	(.74)							
5. Rapport building perceptions	3.91	0.61	.22**	.06	.07	.15	(.74)						
Symbolic organizational attributes													
6. Competence perceptions	4.46	0.47	.24**	.27**	.08	.24**	.40**	(.88)					
7. Benevolence perceptions	3.95	0.60	.15*	.27**	.24**	.17*	.48**	.54**	(.89)				
Post-interview recruiting outcomes (Time 2)													
8. Organizational attractiveness	4.70	0.45	.21**	.53**	.18*	.21**	.28**	.50**	.37**	(.75)			
9. Recommendation intentions	4.39	0.73	.18*	.27**	.53**	.21**	.27**	.34**	.32**	.42**	(-)		
Follow-up recruiting outcomes (Time 3)													
10. Organizational attractiveness	4.64	0.56	.32**	.49**	.12	.13	.19*	.45**	.35**	.63**	.33**	(.87)	
11. Recommendation intentions	4.21	0.81	.18*	.08	.34**	.11	.18*	.29**	.27**	.23**	.48**	.48**	(-)

Note. Because of missing data, *N* for correlations ranges from 123 to 173. Reliability estimates appear in parentheses on the diagonal. Outcome favorability was coded 0 = no offer; 1 = offer. All variables were measured on a 1–5 scale.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

university. The means of both consistency ($M = 4.25$) and rapport building perceptions ($M = 3.91$) were high, supporting the notion that in selection interviews, applicants can experience consistency and rapport building at the same time. The low intercorrelation of the two variables provided further support for their distinctiveness, $r = .15$, $p > .05$.

Furthermore, consistency and rapport building perceptions were found to be significantly correlated with post-interview organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions, which is in line with meta-analytic findings on the effects of recruitment process and recruiter characteristics (cf. Chapman et al., 2005; Hausknecht et al., 2004). In addition, consistency and rapport building perceptions were significantly correlated to the mediator variables proposed, and these mediator variables were significantly correlated to all of the post-interview and follow-up recruiting outcomes (see Table 1).

Test of Hypotheses

Our mediation hypotheses were tested using the multiple mediation SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) in order to take potential alternative mediators into account. In particular, we tested whether organizational competence would serve as a mediator over and above the influence of organizational benevolence, and whether organizational benevolence would serve as a mediator over and above the influence of organizational competence. Each of our four hypotheses was tested with four separate multiple mediator models; that is, one for each dependent variable: pre-interview organizational attractiveness, follow-up organizational attractiveness, pre-interview recommendation intentions, and follow-up recommendation intentions.

Confidence intervals for the population value of unstandardized indirect effects were computed using bias corrected bootstrapping methods. When applying bootstrapped confidence intervals, potential power problems can be avoided that otherwise occur when one calculates products of coefficient tests for intervening variable effects, such as Sobel's (1986) mediation test (LeBreton, Wu, & Bing, 2009). In addition, following recommendations by

Roth and MacKinnon (2012), we adjusted our multiple mediation analyses for baseline values; that is, pre-interview scores of the outcome variables were used as covariates. Furthermore, as stated above, outcome favorability was used as a control variable in all analyses that included follow-up data (cf. Truxillo & Bauer, 2011).

Summarizing Hypotheses 1 and 2, we predicted that organizational competence perceptions would mediate a positive effect of consistency perceptions on recruiting outcomes, while organizational benevolence perceptions would mediate a negative effect of consistency perceptions on recruiting outcomes (see Figure 1). Furthermore, summarizing Hypotheses 3 and 4, we predicted that competence and benevolence perceptions would mediate positive effects of rapport building perceptions on recruiting outcomes. All of these hypotheses referred to recruiting outcomes both directly after the interview (post-interview) and after applicants knew whether they had received an offer or not (follow-up). As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, examination of the total indirect effects indicated that overall, the effects of consistency and rapport building perceptions on recruiting outcomes were mostly mediated by the proposed sets of mediators.

Specifically, in line with Hypothesis 1, examination of the specific indirect effects of consistency perceptions on recruiting outcomes indicated that organizational competence perceptions were a mediator regarding post-interview organizational attractiveness, post-interview recommendation intentions, and follow-up organizational attractiveness, as zero was not contained in their confidence interval and consistency perceptions always had the assumed positive indirect effect (see Table 2). As the only exception, there was no significant specific indirect effect found regarding follow-up recommendation intentions. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was mainly supported.

Next, in contrast to Hypothesis 2, inspection of the specific indirect effects of consistency perceptions indicated that organizational benevolence perceptions were not a mediator regarding any of the post-interview and follow-up recruiting outcomes, as zero was

Table 2. Mediation of the Effect of Consistency Perceptions on Recruiting Outcomes through Organizational Competence and Benevolence Perceptions

	Post-Interview[a]				Follow-Up[b]			
	Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI		Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
Organizational attractiveness								
Competence perceptions	0.05*	0.02	0.02	0.12	0.06*	0.03	0.01	0.14
Benevolence perceptions	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.04	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.05
Total	0.06*	0.03	0.02	0.12	0.07*	0.03	0.02	0.16
Recommendation intentions								
Competence perceptions	0.06*	0.03	0.02	0.14	0.07	0.05	-0.00	0.20
Benevolence perceptions	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.06	0.01	0.03	-0.02	0.10
Total	0.08*	0.03	0.02	0.15	0.09*	0.05	0.01	0.23

Note: BC = bias corrected; 5,000 bootstrap samples; *$p < .05$; [a]$N = 169$ for all post-interview DVs; controlling for pre-interview baseline values; [b]$N = 125$ for all follow-up DVs; controlling for pre-interview baseline values and outcome favorability.

Table 3. Mediation of the Effect of Rapport Building Perceptions on Recruiting Outcomes through Organizational Competence and Benevolence Perceptions

	Post-Interview[a]				Follow-Up[b]			
	Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI		Estimate	*SE*	BC 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
Organizational attractiveness								
Competence perceptions	0.09*	0.04	0.04	0.17	0.09*	0.04	0.03	0.21
Benevolence perceptions	0.01	0.03	-0.06	0.07	0.03	0.03	-0.03	0.10
Total	0.10*	0.04	0.03	0.19	0.12*	0.05	0.04	0.26
Recommendation intentions								
Competence perceptions	0.11*	0.04	0.04	0.21	0.10	0.07	-0.02	0.29
Benevolence perceptions	0.00	0.05	-0.09	0.10	0.04	0.07	-0.09	0.20
Total	0.11	0.05	0.02	0.21	0.14*	0.07	0.02	0.32

Note: BC = bias corrected; 5,000 bootstrap samples; *$p < .05$; [a]$N = 169$ for all post-interview DVs; controlling for pre-interview baseline values; [b]$N = 125$ for all follow-up DVs; controlling for pre-interview baseline values and outcome favorability.

contained in their confidence intervals and consistency perceptions always had a positive instead of the assumed negative indirect effect (see Table 2). Hence, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

In line with Hypothesis 3, examination of the specific indirect effects of rapport building perceptions on recruiting outcomes indicated that organizational competence perceptions were a mediator regarding post-interview organizational attractiveness, post-interview recommendation intentions and follow-up organizational attractiveness, as zero was not contained in their confidence interval and organizational competence perceptions always had the assumed positive indirect effect (see Table 3). As an exception from this general pattern, there was no significant specific indirect effect found regarding follow-up recommendation intentions. Taken together, Hypothesis 3 was mainly supported.

Finally, in contrast to Hypothesis 4, examination of the specific indirect effects of rapport building perceptions indicated that organizational benevolence perceptions were not a mediator regarding any of the post-interview and follow-up recruiting outcomes, as zero was always contained in their confidence intervals (see Table 3). Hence, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

In addition, we conducted analyses to test whether our results were influenced by confounding variables and selective dropout. Multiple mediation analyses were repeated controlling for age, sex, and interview experience, but the results were essentially identical. In addition, analyses regarding post-interview outcomes were conducted again with the follow-up sample ($N = 125$) to check for potential effects of selective dropout, but the pattern of the results did not change.

Discussion

Considerable empirical evidence suggests that interview structure and rapport building are major components of the selection interview that can affect how applicants experience the interview process. However, the influences of interview structure on recruiting outcomes are

not well understood, and the underlying mechanisms that may explain the recruitment effects of both structure and rapport building in selection interviews are still unknown (Campion et al., 1997; Connerley, 2014). Therefore, our main aim was to examine how and why interview structure and rapport building serve as signals for applicants that may affect organizations' attractiveness as an employer and applicants' recommendation intentions.

On the basis of signaling and trust belief frameworks, we developed a conceptual model that delineates multiple processes that are triggered by interview components on the side of the applicant. Specifically, we examined the role of symbolic organizational attributes (organizational competence and benevolence, Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) as key mediators.

We found that the effects of both rapport building and interview structure perceptions on recruiting outcomes were positive and that these effects were mainly mediated by organizational competence perceptions. These findings suggest that when applicants perceive either high levels of interview structure or high levels of rapport building, they are more likely to perceive the organization as competent, which, in turn, makes the organization more attractive and increases applicants' willingness to recommend the organization to others. In contrast, we found no support for the influence of organizational benevolence perceptions as a mediator that went beyond the influence of organizational competence perceptions.

Hence, interview structure and rapport building appear to enhance applicant attraction to the organization primarily by signaling competence of the organization in terms of being reliable, dependable, well-organized, secure, etc. One explanation for the prominent role of organizational competence perceptions may be that competence is a symbolic attribute that is especially important in higher education (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). For applicants in an educational context, it may be more important to study at a university that is well-organized and efficient, which enables students to finish their degree in a given time, than to have a work environment that cares about the student. In other words, organizational benevolence

might rather be facultative for future students whereas organizational competence might constitute a necessity.

In addition, our study adds a new perspective on the recruitment effects of interview structure. Although we expected that interview structure would have positive and negative recruitment effects, we found solely positive effects on organizational attractiveness and applicants' willingness to recommend the organization to others. This finding is in line with propositions that applicants may view interview consistency as professional, face valid, and fair, and that consistency may inspire confidence in the organization (Boswell et al., 2003; Campion et al., 1997; Dipboye et al., 2012; Smither et al., 1993). Furthermore, our results support meta-analytic findings by Chapman et al. (2005) who examined the relationships of selection tools' perceived consistency with three recruiting outcomes (job-organization attraction, job pursuit intentions, and acceptance intentions) and found that these relationships were positive ($\rho = .21$ to $\rho = .32$).

Our finding of positive recruitment effects of interview structure challenges past propositions and findings of negative effects of interview structure on applicants' attitudes and intentions (e.g., Conway & Peneno, 1999; Farago et al., 2013; Kohn & Dipboye, 1998). One explanation may be that actual applicants are likely to perceive and interpret interview components differently than laboratory participants (Chapman et al., 2005). For example, in contrast to the present study, Farago et al. (2013) and Kohn and Dipboye (1998) conducted laboratory studies using student samples. Each student watched and evaluated videotapes of staged interviews (Farago et al., 2013) or read fictive interview transcripts (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998) that were either structured (i.e., past behavioral questions) or unstructured (i.e., more conversational, open-ended, less formal questions). Compared to actual applicants, these undergraduate student participants may have felt less personally involved in the selection process (cf. Chapman et al., 2005). Consequently, they may have experienced interview structure as unpleasant, impersonal and disconcerting. In contrast, actual applicants, whose

consequences of picking a poorly fitting organization are more salient, may tend to interpret interview structure more profoundly in terms of seeing it as purposeful, well-conceived, and professional interview practice, thereby extrapolating these signals to the organization as a whole.

Implications for theory

This study contributes to signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) in at least two ways. In prior research, signaling theory was used in an omnibus manner. As recently posited by Jones et al. (2014), in previous studies, the underlying signaling mechanisms were either simply assumed or remained unspecified. In addition, we were left in the dark regarding the content of the signals. Conversely, the present study put forth specific hypotheses about these underlying mechanisms and the inferences made. That is, we linked signals to applicants' symbolic inferences about organizational attributes (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) and trust (Klotz et al., 2013). Conceptually, use of these frameworks sheds light on how applicants interpret interview structure and rapport building and how these inferences mediate the effects of these interview components on short- and long-term recruiting outcomes. Note that this result also advances recruitment theory because previous recruitment research investigated direct effects of interview components on recruiting outcomes (Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Farago et al., 2013). Our present study goes beyond that literature by concluding that interview structure and rapport building exert influences on recruiting outcomes primarily through their effects on symbolic organizational attributes.

As another theoretical contribution to signaling theory, this study is the first to examine whether different facets of the same HR practice (i.e., different components of the employment interview) exert different signals. Prior research typically applied signaling theory to one specific HR practice, even though that practice might have consisted of different components that might have differential signaling effects (see also Jones & Willness, 2013).

Conversely, in this study, we specified that different components of the interview (structure and rapport building) might lead to different organizational personality perceptions (competence and benevolence) among applicants. Of course, this also raises questions about the convergence of the signals emitted. Along these lines, it was important to find that both components consistently emitted the signal that the organization was seen as competent.

Implications for Practice

Signaling theory also has a practical side to it. That is, once organizations know which signals HR tools emit, organizations might proactively include cues in their recruitment communication to send these signals to applicants (Jones et al., 2014). As we found that two components of the employment interview (structure and rapport building) send signals to applicants, the present study indicates that the way the interview is conducted might provide a key opportunity for enhancing applicants' impression of the organization. Hence, as a next step, organizations might design interview guides and interviewer training in such a way to optimize their signaling effects on applicants' organizational personality inferences and their attraction to the organization. This means that knowledge gained in this study might be used in interview guide and interviewer training to provide recommendations regarding structure and rapport building in employment interviews, thereby increasing recruiting outcomes.

In terms of such specific practical recommendations, this study confirms the known beneficial effects of rapport building on applicants' perceptions (e.g., Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Derous et al., 2004). Hence, to leverage signals about the organization's competence and maximize the effects of their recruitment efforts, interviewers should incorporate rapport building into the selection interview. More importantly, this study does not confirm the belief that structure has deleterious effects on applicant perceptions and attraction (Campion et al., 1997; Conway & Peneno, 1999; Latham & Finnegan, 1993), suggesting that organizations do not need to fear negative effects of interview structure on recruiting outcomes. Thus, a key implication for practice of this study is that interview

structure may not only be beneficial in terms of reliability and validity (e.g., Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Huffcutt, Culbertson, & Weyhrauch, 2013, 2014), but also in terms of organizational attractiveness. Specifically, reducing procedural variation in how interviews are conducted in a moderate way might lead to positive applicant evaluations of organizational competence. In turn, these positive evaluations might result in higher attractiveness of the organization as an employer and applicants' willingness to recommend the organization to potential future applicants.

In sum, if organizational policies and the existing legislation allow, we recommend using moderate levels of rapport building and interview structure for optimizing the recruitment effects of selection interviews, as was the case in the present study. Thus, to integrate *both* interview structure and rapport building in the same employment interview, we propose using a multi-tiered approach in which standardized interview parts (for the purpose of selection) are combined with unrestricted, off-the-cuff interview parts (for the purpose of recruitment, see also Farago et al., 2013; Tsai & Huang, 2014).

Limitations

Although the findings of this study are promising and provide valuable new insights into the interview process, the study is not without limitations. First, this study is based on single-source survey data as all variables were measured via self-report by applicants. Therefore, common method variance may have artificially inflated the relationships between the variables. That said, we followed recommendations by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and applied surveys at three different points in time to create temporal separation of measurements and thus reduce potential influences of common method variance. A related limitation may be that the independent variables in this study (i.e., interview consistency and rapport building perceptions) and the mediator variables (i.e., organizational competence and benevolence perceptions) were measured at the same time, directly after the interview, so that reversed causation may apply.

Second, data of the present study were collected within one single organization. Consequently, the range of interview structure and rapport building may have been restricted. However, we chose a setting in which the level of structure was moderate and in which there were no constraints for rapport building, both of which allowed for adequate variance.

Implications for Future Research

We see this study as the beginning of research on the signaling effects of selection procedures such as employment interviews. Along these lines, we concur with Jones et al. (2014) that signaling research is still in its infancy in the recruitment and selection domain. In particular, we envision the following four key areas of future research.

First, we welcome research that extends our signaling framework to other interview components and levels. An important question is whether the results of this study also apply to more extreme forms of structure and rapport building, or if at some point structure and rapport building might have negative effects on recruiting outcomes in terms of inverted U-shaped relationships. In experimental research, it is possible to incorporate a wider range of different levels of interview structure and rapport building on the basis of the classification schemes of Huffcutt and Arthur (1994) and Levashina (2014). In a similar vein, we encourage future research on the signaling effects of selection procedures other than interviews.

Second, this study started to explain the "whys and hows" related to the effects of interview components on recruiting outcomes. However, it is also pivotal to factor in the "when" question. In other words, moderators of the effects of interview components on applicants' organizational personality inferences and organizational attraction should be examined. In terms of individual differences moderators, the person-organization fit logic (e.g., Slaughter & Greguras, 2009) suggests that some individuals (e.g., individuals high on agreeableness) are more susceptible to specific signals (benevolence perceptions) than others. In terms of situational moderators, applicants' perceptions of interview components such as rapport building may change throughout the course of the interview (e.g., at the beginning,

middle, and end). Therefore, we need research to test whether the timing of interviewers' rapport building efforts has a moderating effect on the relationship between applicants' rapport building perceptions and recruiting outcomes. Perhaps rapport building early in the interview is particularly important because feelings of trust that are created at the beginning should have an impact throughout the whole interview. Furthermore, applicants' trust at an early stage may positively influence how applicants perceive and interpret other interview components such as interview structure (e.g., seeing structure as a signal of organizational competence instead of as a signal of lacking organizational benevolence).

Third, our study can be situated in both the recruitment and selection domain as we studied the effects of a selection procedure on recruiting outcomes (see also Lievens & Chapman, 2009). We are convinced that signaling theory might help building a bridge between the recruitment and selection domains because it enables researchers to examine whether recruitment and selection consistently emit the same signals to applicants (as posited by strategic HR management). Hence, we need studies that scrutinize the joint effects of signals emitted by HR tools along the different recruitment stages. Examples are media campaigns, recruitment ads, recruiters, site visits, interviewers, and selection procedures. Along these lines, we welcome qualitative research that evokes what kind of signals different practices emit. To what extent do the signals of these different practices converge? Are there spill-over effects? Which practices do applicants view as most important in terms of signal-emitting potential? Etc.

Fourth, future studies should consider a wider set of outcome variables. Whereas this study examined organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions in both the short- and long-term, future studies could extend this line of research with other recruitment (applicant quantity and quality) and selection (validity) outcomes (Dipboye et al., 2012). This expansion would enable researchers to determine the ideal trade-offs between different levels

of interview structure and rapport building that maximize both recruitment and selection criteria.

In sum, we encourage scholars to further incorporate signaling frameworks into selection research to better understand the intricacies of human interactions embedded within, particularly applicants' perceptions and interpretations of these interactions. We hope that future research on the questions and topics that we have pointed out will further illuminate how, why, and when procedural variations in selection practices enhance recruitment and selection outcomes.

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Appendix A

Sample questions from the interview guide sorted by topical areas

1. Interest in psychology

   How would you explain what psychology actually is to someone who is not familiar with psychology?

2. Realistic expectations regarding content and later occupation

   How do you envision your future professional occupation?

3. Commitment

   Was there a period in your life in which you were especially burdened (in the sense of having a lot to do or having to deal with many things at the same time)? How did you deal with this?

4. Professional attitude

   How do you define yourself (your role) as a psychologist in problem solving?

5. Social skills

   How would others (e.g., good friends, peers, colleagues) describe you? Is there a difference between your own description and that of others? If so, how do you explain this?

6. Interest in interdisciplinary collaboration

   Can you think of specific fields of work where an interdisciplinary team would be ideal?

Appendix B

Survey Items

Consistency perceptions (i.e., perceived reduction of procedural variations in how interviews are conducted)

1. I had the impression that interviewers made no distinction in how they treated applicants.
2. I had the impression that the interview was administered to all applicants in the same way.
3. I believe there were no differences in the way the interview was conducted with different applicants.

Rapport building perceptions (i.e., perceived efforts of interviewers to establish rapport with the applicant, such as friendly conversation to put the applicant at ease)

1. The interviewers were interested in me as a person.
2. The interviewers addressed me as an individual.
3. The interviewers were empathetic towards me.
4. The interviewers behaved in a trustworthy manner.

Organizational competence perceptions (i.e., the degree to which applicants perceive the organization as well-organized, secure, and dependable)

Please indicate to what degree the following trait adjectives describe the university you are applying to:

1. Efficient
2. Organized
3. Reliable
4. Steady
5. Systematic
6. Thorough
7. Neat
8. Conscientious

Organizational benevolence perceptions (i.e., the degree to which applicants perceive the organization as supportive, likable, and understanding)

Please indicate to what degree the following trait adjectives describe the university you are applying to:

1. Pleasant
2. Personal

3. Helpful
4. Cooperative
5. Friendly
6. Sympathetic
7. Trustful
8. Considerate

Organizational attractiveness (i.e., applicants' affective and attitudinal thoughts about this organization as a potential place to study)

1. This university would be a good place for me to study.
2. This university is attractive to me as a place to study.
3. Studying at this university is very appealing to me.
4. I would not be interested in this university except as a last resort. (reverse-worded item)

Recommendation intentions (i.e., applicants' intention to recommend the organization to others who are potentially interested in applying for this study program)

1. I would recommend this university to somebody who seems interested in a degree course in psychology.

General Discussion

This thesis shed light on the signaling processes initiated by interviewers with regard to both deliberate signals in terms of interviewer IM and general signals in terms of basic interview components. Regarding interviewers sending signals, the aim of this thesis was to contribute to our understanding of interviewers' IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes. Regarding applicants responding to signals, the aim was to enhance our understanding of the fine-grained mechanisms that specific kinds of interviewer IM and basic interview components trigger on the side of the applicant. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of the main results and conclusions of this thesis and will discuss its general strengths and limitations. Afterwards I will outline implications for research and practice that can be derived from this research.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Study 1 offers a new perspective on the selection interview by systematically examining how and why interviewers deliberately send signals to applicants in terms of IM. Following a grounded theory approach, a conceptual model and an extensive taxonomy of 111 different interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and outcomes were developed in order to elaborate on signaling theory. A key finding was that interviewers' primary intentions are to signal attractiveness and authenticity, while their secondary intentions are to signal closeness and distance (i.e., distance in terms of professionalism and in terms of superiority). In order to create these impressions on applicants, interviewers may deliberately apply a broad spectrum of signals such as verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal, artifactual, and administrative IM behaviors. Another major finding was that interviewers use IM behaviors in order to improve a wide range of different outcomes relevant to organizations, applicants, and interviewers themselves. In line with interdependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), these findings show that interviewer IM should be considered a phenomenon that may be related to, but is

nevertheless quite distinct from applicant IM. Consequently, prior assumptions that interviewers use the same IM behaviors as applicants (e.g., Stevens, Mitchell, & Tripp, 1990) do not seem justified. In addition, this study challenges the way we think of interviewers by providing empirical evidence that interviewers not only see their own role as information gathering, but also as representing the organization.

Study 2 drew on two interviewer IM behaviors that were reported in *Study 1*, interviewer self-promotion and ingratiation, and examined the signaling processes triggered by these behaviors. On the basis of video data from real selection interviews, a key result was that these interviewer IM behaviors serve as signals for interviewer characteristics. Applicants perceived interviewers as more competent when they used more self-promotion and as more interested in the applicant when they used more ingratiation. Another main finding was that interviewer self-promotion indirectly increased applicant attraction to the organization through perceptions of interviewer competence. Furthermore, interviewer ingratiation indirectly increased applicants' positive self-perceptions through perceptions of interviewers' interest in the applicant. In summary, this study illustrates that different interviewer IM behaviors may be used with different intentions, such as selling oneself and one's organization and inducing liking in the applicant. In this vein, this study underpins and confirms previously neglected theoretical assumptions on differential effects of IM (Gilmore, Stevens, Harrel-Cook, & Ferris, 1999; Jones & Pittman, 1982). Furthermore, these findings advance signaling theory (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Spence, 1973) by showing that the signaling process that is initiated by interviewers does not solely start with applicants' perceptions of interviewer characteristics, but with the actual IM behaviors interviewers show.

Taken together, findings from *Study 1* and *Study 2* provide evidence that interviewer IM behaviors can and do serve as signals for applicants and influence their emotions, attitudes, and intentions towards the company. Both studies complement each other in that *Study 1* used a qualitative method to identify the broad range of signals interviewers may

deliberately apply, whereas *Study 2* provided quantitative evidence on the reactions specific signals elicit in applicants. Furthermore, both studies elaborate on signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) – *Study 1* by presenting a conceptual model on the main elements of deliberate signaling processes initiated on the side of the interviewer, and *Study 2* by integrating theoretical frameworks on IM (Gilmore et al., 1999; Jones & Pittman, 1982) and introducing interviewer IM as a key predictor of perceived interviewer characteristics.

Study 3 investigated potential mechanisms linking general signals in terms of major interview components (i.e., interview structure and rapport building) to recruiting outcomes using longitudinal three-wave field data. In line with signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) and trust belief frameworks (Klotz, da Motta Veiga, Buckley, & Gavin, 2013), findings show that the effects of both rapport building and interview structure perceptions on organizations' attractiveness as an employer and applicants' recommendation intentions were positive and were mainly mediated by organizational competence perceptions (i.e., perceiving the organization as well-organized, reliable, and thorough). These results challenge the assumption that interview structure is likely to deter applicants from joining the organization by showing that not only rapport building but also interview structure may ultimately have positive effects on recruiting outcomes. Furthermore, by integrating signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973), trust belief frameworks (Klotz et al., 2013), and instrumental-symbolic frameworks (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), this study emphasizes the key role of symbolic organizational attributes for understanding the signaling interplay between interviewers and applicants.

Overall, the results of *Study 2* and *Study 3* imply that signals on the side of the interviewer tend to have indirect effects on recruiting outcomes. Regarding deliberate signals in terms of interviewer IM, perceived interviewer characteristics were found to be the main mechanism. Regarding general signals in terms of basic interview components, symbolic organizational attributes such as organizational competence perceptions were found to be the

main mechanism. Furthermore, the two studies provide evidence that organizational attractiveness is indirectly influenced by both interviewer IM behaviors and interview components, as this recruiting outcome was incorporated in both studies.

Strengths and Limitations

A considerable strength of this thesis is that it provides insights into the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers and thus supports and advances signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012). All of the different elements examined in the three studies have proven useful for a better understanding of how and why interviewers send signals to applicants, and how and why applicants respond to these signals. Particularly, the present thesis highlights the insights to be gained from a recruitment perspective on signaling processes in the interview when signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) is combined with complementary theories such as interdependence theory (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), IM frameworks (Gilmore et al., 1999; Jones & Pittman, 1982), trust frameworks (Klotz et al., 2013), and instrumental-symbolic frameworks (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Accordingly, this thesis may give rise to further considerations of signaling theory as a theoretical guide to understand how applicants experience and react to interviews.

A further strength is the comprehensive and diverse data basis of this thesis. All three studies used field data from real selection settings, which increases the external validity and generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the data stemmed from multiple different sources such as applicants (*Study 1*, *Study 2*, and *Study 3*), interviewers (*Study 1*), and independent raters (*Study 2*). In addition, the data were collected using different methods such as in-depth interviews, observations, member checks (*Study 1*), video codings (*Study 2*), and surveys (*Study 2* and *Study 3*). Altogether, using these multiple sources and independent measurements diminished problems that are associated with shared method variance (cf. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Another strength relates to the longitudinal design that *Study 2* and *Study 3* relied upon. The majority of past research on applicant reactions and recruiting outcomes has applied cross-sectional designs, even though these designs are unlikely to encompass the complexities of the interview process (Connerley, 2014). Thus, to capture temporal dynamics and developments in recruiting outcomes throughout the interview process, we chose to collect data at different points in time (as suggested by Chan & Schmitt, 2004). In addition, we chose longitudinal study designs to control for applicants' initial perceptions and intentions before the interview (as suggested by Truxillo & Bauer, 2011).

Despite its notable strengths, this thesis also has its limitations. One issue relates to the definition and the operationalizations of IM. In the present thesis, interviewer IM was defined as interviewers' deliberate attempts to create favorable impressions on applicants (cf. Schlenker, 1980). Accordingly, in *Study 1*, we used in-depth interviews and asked interviewers about their IM intentions to ensure that the IM behaviors we identified were indeed deliberately applied. However, it may be that signals examined in *Study 2* partly encompassed general instead of deliberate signals, whereas signals examined in *Study 3* partly encompassed deliberate instead of general signals. In *Study 2*, we focused on actual interviewer behavior and used video codings to gain valuable insights into the frequency of these behaviors. Even though this methodology is in line with previous research (McFarland, Yun, Harold, Viera, & Moore, 2005; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995), it leads to the limitation that it remains unclear to what degree interviewers actually had the intention to create favorable impressions on applicants, which is part of the definition of IM. Conversely, *Study 3* used applicant self-reports to measure interview components such as structure and rapport building, which implies that it remains unclear to what degree these components might have actually constituted IM in terms of being applied deliberately to influence applicant impressions. Related to this issue, *Study 1* revealed that interviewers may deliberately apply rapport building to create impressions of closeness and may choose to

conduct interviews in a standardized way in order to create impressions of professionalism and objectivity. Further research that combines video codings and applicant self-reports with interviewer self-reports could enhance the fit between the conceptualization and measurement of IM and provide clarification.

Another limitation of this thesis is that no behavioral outcome criteria were assessed. Even though *Study 1* stresses the role of applicants' behavioral reactions to signals sent by interviewers (i.e., job choice behavior, recommendation behavior, reapplication behavior, and consumer behavior), *Study 2* and *Study 3* focused on applicant perceptions, attitudes, and intentions instead of behaviors. This focus leaves open the question of whether interviewer IM and interview components also predict applicant behaviors after the interview. The lack of research on behaviors has been lamented for more than a decade (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000), and there has only been little progress along these lines (Hausknecht, 2014). One reason for this lack of progress is that behavioral outcomes such as consumer behavior may not be relevant in every recruitment context (Cable & Yu, 2014), for example, in higher education such as in *Study 2* and *Study 3*. In addition, the effects on reapplication behavior can only be examined if reapplication is possible and if the sample of applicants can be tracked long-term (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011). Furthermore, regarding job choice behavior, effect sizes are often diminished because usually only a few positions are offered, which leads to reduced sample sizes (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Despite these challenges, it would be helpful to move beyond intentions and examine the conditions under which applicants' experiences of the interview process actually influence their behaviors (Hausknecht, 2014).

Another limitation of this thesis relates to the fact that the data were collected in Switzerland and Germany. Interviewer IM intentions and behaviors may vary between different national cultures, as it has been found for applicant self-presentation (König, Wong, & Cen, 2012). In particular, cross-cultural research indicates that Swiss individuals tend to

apply relatively low levels of self-presentation behaviors (König, Hafsteinsson, Jansen, & Stadelmann, 2011). Thus, *Study 1* and *Study 2* may have been influenced by the fact that most participants were Swiss, which might have decreased variance in the data. However, by the same token, the samples used in this thesis may have been conservative for testing our arguments, which further underlines the significance of our results. In addition, scholars have recently pointed out that applicant reactions are comparable across different countries (Anderson, Salgado, & Hülsheger, 2010). This finding further lessens concerns of limited generalizability as all three studies took a recruitment perspective on the interview in terms of applicant reactions.

Implications for Research

The findings presented in this thesis provide valuable insights into the signaling processes initiated by interviewers, especially regarding the conceptual components associated with interviewers sending signals and applicants responding to signals. When we take the mechanisms into consideration that we found in the three studies, future research would profit from further elaborating on signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012; Spence, 1973) by combining all of the conceptual components examined. For instance, on the basis of *Study 1*, interviewer IM intentions are likely to influence the set of IM behaviors that interviewers apply. Furthermore, on the basis of *Study 2* and *Study 3*, applicants may interpret these interviewer IM behaviors in terms of drawing inferences on interviewer characteristics, which, in turn, may be generalized to the organization as a whole in terms of symbolic organizational attributes. These symbolic organizational attributes might, in turn, influence the broad range of recruiting outcomes identified in *Study 1* such as outcomes related to applicants (e.g., applicant self-esteem), organizations (e.g., organizational reputation), and interviewers (e.g., interviewer reputation). These multiple indirect effects could, for example, be tested using serial mediation models (Hayes, 2013) to further enhance our understanding of the complex signaling dynamics in the interview.

Another important remaining conceptual question that is raised by this thesis refers to a consensus on the definition of IM in order to enhance comparisons of results across studies. A general drawback in IM research has been its conceptual fuzziness (Koslowsky & Pindek, 2011). It has not been clearly defined how IM relates to signals in a more general term, whether the effect on applicants matters enough to consider labeling behaviors as IM, whether IM needs to be conscious, and whether IM needs to be intentional (Tsai & Huang, 2014). In the present thesis, definitions by Spence (1973) and Schlenker (1980) were integrated in order to overcome this fuzziness and conceptualize interviewer IM as deliberate and potentially conscious signaling behavior. I believe that this way of conceptualizing IM is a valuable step toward understanding the phenomenon of IM and should be applied and further refined in future research. For instance, scholars should examine boundary conditions that influence the use of conscious as opposed to less conscious IM. In this regard, it seems plausible that interviewers from organizations that constitute attractive employers may not have to put much effort in recruitment and may thus use less conscious IM than interviewers finding themselves in unfavorable recruitment conditions (Tsai & Huang, 2014).

In addition, using the present thesis as a springboard, future research should acknowledge the role of interviewers' honesty in conceptualizing IM. In line with recent suggestions in the literature (Tsai & Huang, 2014), I believe that interviewer IM can be either honest or deceptive depending on whether the signal that is deliberately sent represents true facts as opposed to misleading information in terms of creating false impressions. Regarding interview validity, I would assume that honest interviewer IM has the potential to facilitate effective recruitment by meeting applicants' expectations to be given information and attention during the interview (Derous, Born, & De Witte, 2004) and by decreasing dropout of applicants who would in fact constitute a good fit (Harold, Uggerslev, & Kraichy, 2014). Conversely, I see a severe risk in deceptive interviewer IM of decreasing interview validity because distortion of information is likely to lead to unrealistic expectations on the side of the

applicant and decrease person-job fit. Future research should therefore find ways to detect honest and deceptive interviewer IM, examine to what extent and under what conditions interviewers tend to use deceptive instead of honest IM, and test the proposed effects on interview validity.

Related to the definition of interviewer IM, another avenue for future research refers to its operationalization and measurement. If intention is considered a necessary condition of interviewer IM, as suggested by this thesis, self-report measures should be developed. Past research indicates that the interpretation of IM depends on the role and perspective of the rater (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Whereas other raters (e.g., independent observers) may be unaware of or misinterpret the senders' intents, self-reports can reflect the senders' intents to present themselves in a favorable light (Tsai & Huang, 2014). Particularly, it seems important to create self-report measures that capture the broad range of different IM intentions and behaviors outlined in the present thesis. Furthermore, these measures should be validated in different industries and national cultures.

In addition, future research would profit from incorporating both sides of the interview table and jointly examine applicants and interviewers as sending and responding to signals. Scholars should investigate the "signaling game" (Bangerter et al., 2012) of applicants and interviewers in terms of the dynamic interactions of applicant and interviewer IM in the course of the interview. Particularly, it would be important to understand how applicants and interviewers differ in the way they respond to signals in the interview and adapt their IM behaviors, respectively. For instance, based on the interviewer IM taxonomy derived in *Study 1* and existing applicant IM taxonomies (e.g., Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Stevens & Kristof, 1995), signaling processes in the interview could be examined using methods like interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). In sum, I encourage scholars to further incorporate signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012) into interview research to fully

understand the intricacies of human interactions embedded within interviews, particularly the complex interplay of signaling processes on the side of the applicant and the interviewer.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this thesis not only have important implications for research but also give rise to profound reflection on current interview practice, particularly on how best to attract and retain high performing applicants. Taken together, this thesis provides important evidence on the opportunity of increasing organizations' competitive advantage through signals that are sent to applicants in the course of the interview process. Specifically, findings of *Study 1* and *Study 2* imply that interviewer IM behaviors such as self-promotion and ingratiation can be effective recruitment strategies. Self-enhancement may help interviewers to highlight strengths of themselves, the job, and the organization and thus attract applicants. Ingratiation may help interviewers to make applicants feel wanted and thus foster positive emotions and feelings of self-confidence. In addition, *Study 3* shows that in order to leverage signals about the organization's competence and maximize the effects of their recruitment efforts, interviewers should incorporate rapport building into the interview and reduce procedural variation in how interviews are conducted. Organizations are recommended to use these insights on how interviews can be conducted in a way that makes it a worthwhile experience for applicants and, partly as a result of this experience, a successful recruitment effort for organizations.

Furthermore, in order to effectively use these signals as a leverage point to enhance recruiting outcomes, knowledge gained in this study may be applied in interviewer training. Interviewers could be informed that different kinds of interviewer IM behaviors can be an effective tool to enhance different recruiting outcomes. Furthermore, interviewers' IM skills may be trained using role plays. In addition, interviewers may be taught how to build rapport with applicants in an effective and authentic way and how to increase interview structure without appearing distant and cold, for example, by using paraverbal strategies such as asking

questions with a friendly sounding voice. It should be noted, however, that rapport building and interview structure would in fact constitute interviewer IM behaviors if they are applied in such a deliberate manor (as opposed to basic interview components, as they are defined in *Study 3*).

Another practical implication derived from this thesis is that in order to achieve a balance between the recruitment and selection functions, interviewers could differentiate interview sections designated for the purpose of assessment from interview sections designated for the purpose of creating favorable impressions on applicants. This differentiation could be achieved by conducting separate interviews (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998). Alternatively, to save resources, highly structured interview parts could be combined with more personal interview parts that allow for rapport building, ingratiation, and interviewer self-promotion, similar to the idea of the multimodal employment interview by Schuler and Funke (1989). This method would allow interviewers to fulfill their recruitment aims, but also ensure valid selection decisions (Marr & Cable, 2014).

Altogether, the present thesis has helped to shape our understanding of when, why, how, and what kind of signaling phenomena unfold in the interview. Specifically, this thesis shed light on both the interviewer's perspective in terms of sending signals and the applicant's perspective in terms of responding to signals. These insights do not only provide valuable implications for current interview practice and theory, but also lay the foundation for more multifaceted, illuminating research on signaling processes in the future.

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Summary

This thesis offers a new perspective on the selection interview by shedding light on signaling processes initiated by interviewers. *Study 1* used a qualitative approach to develop a conceptual model and a taxonomy on how and why interviewers deliberately send signals to applicants in terms of impression management (IM). Results illustrated that the spectrum of interviewer IM intentions, behaviors, and intended outcomes goes well beyond what has been proposed in past research. *Study 2* examined interviewer IM as a key predictor of perceived interviewer characteristics. Observational and survey data from 110 interviews revealed differential effects of interviewer IM. Results showed that applicants perceived interviewers as more competent when they used more self-promotion and as more interested in the applicant when they used more ingratiation. In addition, interviewer self-promotion indirectly influenced applicant attraction after the interview through its effects on perceived interviewer competence. Interviewer ingratiation indirectly influenced applicants' self-perceptions after the interview through its effects on perceived interviewer interest in the applicant. *Study 3* investigated potential mechanisms linking general signals in terms of major interview components (i.e., interview structure and rapport building) to organizations' attractiveness and applicants' recommendation intentions. Longitudinal three-wave survey data from 173 interviews showed that the effects of both rapport building and interview structure perceptions on recruiting outcomes were positive and were mainly mediated by organizational competence perceptions. Taken together, this thesis provides insights into interviewers sending signals and applicants responding to these signals and thus supports and advances signaling theory. Findings contribute to a theoretical understanding of the whole signaling process initiated by interviewers and offer valuable practical implications for interviewers and organizations. Furthermore, this thesis takes steps towards a more fine-grained and explicit way of conceptualizing and operationalizing IM and signals by interviewers.

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Curriculum Vitae

Annika Wilhelmy

born in Frankfurt (Main), Germany

Educational and Employment Background

Jul 2010 – Present	University of Zurich, Switzerland, Department of Psychology, Work and Organizational Psychology **Scientific Assistant and PhD Student** Advisor: Prof. Dr. Martin Kleinmann
Mai 2010	Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany **Diplom in Psychology** (German Master's equivalent) Minor: Business Administration Thesis: Effects of Practice, Coaching, and Transparency on In-basket Performance, Advisor: Prof. Dr. Petra Halder-Sinn
Apr 2008 – Sep 2008	**Teaching Assistant**, Medical Psychology Course for Medicine Students, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, Prof. Dr. Jörg Kupfer
Aug 2007 – Mai 2010	**Student Assistant**, Student Advisory Service of the Department of Psychology, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, Prof. Dr. Volker Franz
Apr 2007 – Jul 2007	**Teaching Assistant**, Experimental Psychology Lab, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, Prof. Dr. Volker Franz
Sep 2006	Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany **Vordiplom in Psychology** (German two-year undergraduate degree) Thesis: Gender Effects in Emotion Perception Advisor: Prof. Dr. Peter Kirsch

Study and Research Stays Abroad

Feb 2012 – May 2012	Research Stay at Portland State University, Oregon, USA, Prof. Donald Truxillo
Feb 2009 – Aug 2009	Semester Abroad at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
Sep 2006 – Feb 2007	Semester Abroad at the Nancy 2 University, Nancy, France
June 2001 – Dec 2001	Exchange Student at Ventura High School, Ventura, California, USA

Scholarships

Jan 2008 – May 2010	Scholarship from the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes)
Feb 2009 – Aug 2009	Scholarship from the Hessen-Queensland Exchange Program (a student exchange program of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts, Hessen, Germany)
Sep 2006 – Feb 2007	Scholarship from the ERASMUS Program (a student exchange program of the European Union)

Internships

Aug 2007 – Oct 2007	Six-week internship at the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Frankfurt (Main), Germany
Feb 2007 – Apr 2007	Eight-week internship in the Personnel Advisory Service Section of the Human Resource Department of Commerzbank AG, Frankfurt (Main), Germany
Feb 2006 – Apr 2006	Six-week internship at the Max Planck Institute of Brain Research, Frankfurt (Main), Germany in the Psychophysics Research Group, Prof. Dr. Ruxandra Sireteanu

Teaching Experience

Sep 2013 – Dec 2013	Lecturer, Seminar “Leadership of Employees” for Master Students, University of Zurich
Sep 2012 – Dec 2012	Lecturer, Seminar “Leadership“ for Master Students, University of Zurich
Sep 2011 – Dec 2011	Lecturer, Seminar “Selected Topics in Leadership“ for Master Students, University of Zurich
Feb 2010 – Jun 2010	Lecturer, Seminar “Personnel Development and Training“ for Bachelor Students, University of Zurich

Supervision of Master’s Theses

May 2013 – Jun 2014	Self-Verification in Employment Interviews: Which Factors Influence Whether Applicants Present Themselves in an Honest Way? (Manuel Stühlinger and Dolker Taphuntsang)
Dec 2012 – Nov 2013	How Do Recruiter Behaviors, Organizational Reputation, Perceived Fit and Self-Efficacy Influence Application Intention and Behavior? (Leila Widmer)
Feb 2012 – May 2013	Influences of Interviewer Behaviors on Applicant Emotions, Intentions and Behaviors (Isabel Wildbolz)
Jan 2012 – Jan 2013	Influences of Applicant Expectations in Selection Interviews (Lisa Juliane Schneider)
Jul 2011 – Jul 2012	How Do Perceived Consistency and Perceived Individual Consideration in Interviews Affect Recruiting Outcomes? (Stéphanie Weissert)

Publications and Congress Presentations

Melchers, K. G., Ingold, P. V., Wilhelmy, A., & Kleinmann, M. (in press). Beyond validity: Shedding light on the social situation in employment interviews. In I. Nikolaou & J. K. Oostrom (Eds.), *Employee recruitment, selection, and assessment: Contemporary issues for theory and practice.* Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., & Melchers, K. G. (2014, August). *Selling and smooth-talking as recruitment tools? Differential signaling effects of interviewer impression management.* Paper presented at the 3rd meeting of the European Network of Selection Researchers (ENESER), Ghent, Belgium.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., & Melchers, K. G. (2014, July). *Effects of interviewer impression management on applicant reactions.* Paper presented at the 28th International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP), Paris, France.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., & Melchers, K. G. (2013, May). *Off the shelf or tailor-made: How perceived interviewer behavior affects recruiting outcomes.* Paper presented at the 16th European Congress of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), Münster, Germany.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., König, C. J., & Melchers, K. G. (2012, September). *Wie Interviewer Bewerber umwerben: Eine qualitative Studie zum Impression Management von Interviewern.* Vortrag auf dem 48. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Psychologie, Bielefeld, Deutschland.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., Melchers, K. G., & König, C. J. (2012, June). *How interviewers try to make favorable impressions: A qualitative study.* Paper presented at the 2nd meeting of the European Network of Selection Researchers (ENESER), Sheffield, UK.

Wilhelmy, A., Kleinmann, M., Melchers, K. G., & König, C. J. (2012, April). *How interviewers try to make favorable impressions: A qualitative study.* Paper presented at the 27th annual conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), San Diego, USA.

Wilhelmy, A., Halder-Sinn, P., & Nietsch, J. (2011, September). *Übung macht den Manager? Der Einfluss von Übung und Coaching auf die Leistung in Postkorbaufgaben.* Vortrag auf der 7. Tagung der Fachgruppe Arbeits-, Organisations- und Wirtschaftspsychologie der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Psychologie, Rostock, Deutschland.

Wilhelmy, A., Halder-Sinn, P., & Nietsch, J. (2011, September). *Does Practice Make Perfect? Retest Effects on In-Basket Performance.* Paper presented at the 12th Congress of the Swiss Psychological Society, Fribourg, Switzerland.